

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE USE OF MINDFULNESS
MEDITATION IN THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING
FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF TRANSPERSONAL
PSYCHOLOGY AND PROCESS THEOLOGY

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Louise Ann Graves

May 1999

Diagrams 1 and 3 are reproduced from Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution by Ken Wilber, © 1995. Published by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.

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accepted by the Faculty of the School of Theology at
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ABSTRACT

**A Theoretical Framework for the Use of Mindfulness Meditation
in the Practice of Pastoral Counselling from the Perspectives of
Transpersonal Psychology and Process Theology**

by

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This dissertation argues that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Teachers of mindfulness meditation assert that this discipline is particularly effective in facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Clinical evidence supports this claim. In order for this tool to be adopted by pastoral counsellors, they need a framework that is inclusive of both theological and psychological perspectives and is thereby able to address both psyche and spirit.

This dissertation presents a theoretical analysis and discussion of the implementation of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling. The discussions on: (1) an evolutionary view of reality, (2) God's presence and action in creation, (3) the nature of human growth and development, and (4) the nature of pathology and healing, demonstrate how process theology and transpersonal psychology support and complement each other. Together, these schools of thought provide a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of mindfulness meditation and how it can further psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

Specifically, this work argues that mindfulness meditation is able to enhance awareness.

Enhanced awareness enables people to move from habitual patterns of behaviour, to respond creatively to experience, and to actualize the best of the possibilities before them. God's persuasive call is for entities to enjoy increased intensity of experience, which is facilitated by increased breadth and depth. Psychological and spiritual growth is understood as a process whereby consciousness evolves to encompass increasing breadth and depth. Pathology results from the self's becoming stuck at various developmental levels. Mindfulness meditation facilitates increased awareness and allows individuals to move through identification, differentiation, transcendence, and reintegration, thereby facilitating healing and promoting growth.

In conclusion, suggestions are made as to how mindfulness meditation may be incorporated into pastoral counselling, for both the counsellor and the client. Suggestions are also made concerning when mindfulness meditation may be counter-indicated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have generously supported and guided me in the writing of this dissertation. This work would not have been possible without the encouragement and care of so many colleagues, friends, and family. I can try only to acknowledge some of the individuals who have assisted me in this work.

First, I want to thank Dr. Kallon Basquin for introducing me to the practice of mindfulness meditation, for his steadfast encouragement throughout my theological and psychological wrestling, for his open heart, and for his steady presence. Dr. Basquin has generously shared his wisdom and knowledge with me. His support has been invaluable.

Second, I offer heartfelt thanks to Ane Pema Chödrön. She is a living example of awakened compassion. Her teachings offered me inspiration. Her friendship has been a constant source of encouragement.

I also want to thank my dissertation committee. Dr. Kathleen Greider, Dr. David Griffin, and Dr. Daryl Smith read and responded to chapter drafts, encouraged clarity in my thinking, provided careful criticism, and excellent suggestions.

I want to thank Elaine Walker for all of her help with form and style. The Rev. Mev Skey also helped in reading and editing and gave me opportunities to talk about my work and offered important feedback, support, and humour. Dr. John Buchanan helped me clarify my thoughts on process philosophy and shared his work on process theology and transpersonal psychology. Dr. Ed Aluzas, my clinical supervisor while in Claremont, encouraged me to pursue my interest in the use of spiritual disciplines in pastoral counselling practice. Some friends who have been with me through my studies include:

Ann Kellog and Marilyn Pollock, who opened their homes and hearts to me on my many trips to Claremont; Curtis Ronci who helped me hold the vision; and my cousin Brent Gliebs who provided invaluable computer assistance.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My mother and father, Florence and Aubrey Graves, taught me much about the enormous potential of the human heart. It was through them that I first learned about God and love. I am grateful to them for all they have given to me throughout my life. Susan and Brett, my sister and brother, have taught me about possibility, perseverance, and courage. My nieces Vanessa and Leah have brought me joy. Without my family, this work would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Pastoral Counselling: Psychology and Spirituality	2
Scope and Limitations of this Dissertation	5
Mindfulness Meditation: A Tool for Pastoral Counsellors	6
The Value of Meditation for Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth	10
The Use of Contemplative Disciplines in Pastoral Counselling	19
Conclusions	28
Chapter Summary	29
2. Setting the Ground	32
The Nature of Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Work	32
Cultural Constructivism, Cultural Relativity and Inter-Cultural Dialogue	33
Cultural Constructivism	34
Cultural Relativity	39
Definitions of Terms	44
Case Study Material	46
Summary	46
3. The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation: The Contemplative Community's Perspective	48
The Practice of Mindfulness Meditation: An Introduction	48

Overview of the Effects of Mindfulness Meditation	51
Increased Awareness of Experience	52
Discovery of Basic Goodness	55
Awakening Genuine Heart	57
Fear	58
Gentleness	59
Inquisitiveness	60
Synchronization of Body and Mind	61
Increased Trust in the World	61
Tranquility	62
Joy and Humour	63
Energy	63
Increased Openness to Oneself and Others	65
Increased Desire and Ability to Serve the World	66
Summary	67
4. An Evolutionary View of Reality	69
What Is Meant by Evolution	71
The Dynamic Nature of Creation	72
Ongoing Creation: The World is Self-Creative	74
The Emergence of Novelty	74
Dependence and Determinism	79
Directionality in Creation	83

Summary	88
5. God's Presence and Action in Creation	90
God's Role in the Formation of Actual Occasions	92
The Nature of God's Will for Creation	98
The Nature of God's Power	99
Summary	101
6. The Nature of Human Consciousness	103
The Continuum of Existence	104
A Process View of Living Entities	106
Unity of Experience	108
Prehension, Perception and Consciousness	112
Three Modes of Perception	115
Summary	122
7. Human Growth and Development	124
Directionality of Psychological and Spiritual Growth and Development	127
Processes Involved in the Transformation of Consciousness	130
Levels of Consciousness	134
Sensorimotor	137
Preoperational	139
Concrete Operational	141
Formal Operational	142
Vision-Logic	143

Spirit	143
The Ultimate Aim of Growth and Development	147
Summary	159
8. Pathology and Healing	161
God's Power and Creation's Freedom	162
Tension Between Creative Advance and Dissolution	169
Habitual Patterns	172
Pathology: Biological, Social, Cultural and Personal Contributions	177
Levels in the Evolution of Consciousness and Pathology	182
Summary	188
9. Mindfulness Meditation and Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth	190
Intention: The View	193
God's Presence	197
Awareness and Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth	198
Sense Perception and Repression: Transmutation	204
Synchronization of Body and Mind	208
Sense Perceptions and the Ability to Love	211
Emotions	212
Body Armouring	214
Culture and Emotion	215
Emotions and God	217

Mindfulness Meditation and Emotions	219
Thinking: Scripts	222
Mindfulness Meditation and Will	224
Mindfulness Meditation and Spiritual Development	226
Summary	228
10. The Implementation of Mindfulness Meditation in Pastoral Counselling Practice	230
Mindfulness Meditation and the Pastoral Counsellor	230
Mindfulness Meditation and Empathy	232
Mindfulness Meditation and Presence	236
Introducing Mindfulness Meditation to Pastoral Counselling Clients:	
The Urge to be Entertained	239
The Need for Encouragement	242
Why Choose the Tool of Mindfulness Meditation	243
How to Introduce and Use the Practice in Pastoral Counselling	244
Cautionary Notes: Possible Difficulties in Using Mindfulness Meditation	247
Guidelines for Assessment	248
Summary	250
11. Conclusions and Questions for Further Study	251
Bibliography	261

May this book be of benefit.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The wholeness, which the church has a mission to liberate and empower, has spiritual wholeness at its center. This means that helping people experience healing and growth in the vertical dimension (Tillich) of their lives is at the heart of all caring and counselling that is truly pastoral.¹

I begin this dissertation on a personal note, with a few words about what has led me to explore the subject matter of this work. Throughout my life I have experienced a longing to understand spirituality and to pursue spiritual growth. Perhaps this attraction to spirituality was instilled in me as a small child who fell asleep on her father's lap in church. My family was ecumenical at its heart: my grandmother was a Roman Catholic, my father was an Anglican, I was raised in the United Church of Canada. My best friends as a child were Jewish and Hindu. I was raised on the rituals and myths and legends of a variety of religious traditions. I grew up with a keen interest in the relationship between religious traditions and with what truth these traditions may hold about the nature of reality and of human beings.

Experiences in therapy, as a counsellor and as a client, led me to explore the connection between psyche and spirit, and between therapist and minister, or priest. There seemed to be many similarities in technique and in experienced effect. Just as I had a keen interest in the relationship between different religious and spiritual traditions, I became interested in the relationship between spirit and psyche, between psychology and theology, and between ministry and therapy.

¹Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 29-30.

My spiritual journey brought me in contact with mindfulness meditation. I began sitting regularly and was impressed by the effects I began to notice in my life. These were not dramatic conversion experiences, or spiritual highs, but rather a slow and steady increase in my awareness. It was very much as though I was beginning to wake up, not to a particular theology or ideology, but to my own experience of reality in the present.

This led me to investigate the teachings of the meditation masters, as well as academic literature on the effectiveness of various meditation techniques. I found that while numerous studies confirmed the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation, and while this practice had historically been a part of Christian practice, very little had been written about its use from a Christian perspective. Given that mindfulness meditation is effective in supporting the growth and development of human beings, the question leading to this dissertation was how pastoral counsellors might be able effectively to employ the practice of mindfulness meditation in their work.

Pastoral Counselling: Psychology and Spirituality

A fundamental aspect of the pastoral counsellor's *pastoral identity* is the ability to conceptualize, to comprehend, and to work with spirituality and with the interrelatedness of spirit and psyche. Like psychologists and social workers, pastoral counsellors bring to their work an understanding of the nature of psychological healing and growth. What sets us apart from these other professionals is that we also bring to our work a theological understanding of the nature of persons and of reality. Our theology informs us about the nature of God, our own nature, and the ultimate aim and goal of human growth and development. Our theology enables us not only to speak of God, Spirit, and soul, but it

also assists us in understanding how to aid people in their spiritual growth and development. This is part of our unique contribution to the helping professions. In working with the realm of spirituality and spirit we move beyond the limits of traditional psychotherapy.

The pastoral counselling profession, however, is still quite young. While Christian clergy have always participated in pastoral care and counselling, it is only within the last century that pastoral counselling as a distinct discipline has emerged in North America. Both the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors and its Canadian counterpart, the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education, are less than forty years old.²

In those forty years, the profession of pastoral counselling has made enormous progress in its efforts to develop theological and psychological frameworks for furthering the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of human beings. There are still large areas, however, that warrant further exploration. One such area is the exploration of how various spiritual practices might further psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

Our theological grounding and our recognition of the importance of spirituality gives us, as pastoral counsellors, access to a wide variety of resources to aid our work with clients. We can draw upon techniques and tools from both psychotherapy and religion. Contemplative practices (the broad category of spiritual disciplines, which includes various forms of prayer and meditation) are found in most religious traditions. These practices, furthermore, are recognized by many religious and spiritual communities, as being useful

²Howard Clinebell, “Pastoral Counseling Movement,” in Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 857-58.

tools for facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Mindfulness meditation is one contemplative practice that is promoted by a variety of religious communities as being particularly effective.

Although mindfulness meditation is arguably a valuable tool for facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth, there is little evidence that it has been used in pastoral counselling practice. Aside from literature on the use of object-centred meditation and on the use of prayer in counselling practice, there is little help in the literature on how this discipline might be used in pastoral counselling practice. Similarly, there is little help in the literature on what theoretical framework might undergird its use in the practice of pastoral counselling. Without a theoretical framework, or guidelines for practice, the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling cannot be explored, or its benefits offered to clients.

This dissertation argues that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their work to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. If pastoral counsellors are to be able to use the tool of mindfulness meditation in their work with clients, they need a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the practice and its effects. This framework must include the perspectives of both theology and psychology. This dissertation presents a theoretical analysis and discussion of the practice of mindfulness meditation and guidelines for implementing this practice in pastoral counselling. It will draw upon the perspectives of process theology and transpersonal psychology, while building on the foundation that exists in pastoral counselling for the use of other spiritual disciplines in counselling practice.

Scope and Limitations of this Dissertation

The focus of this dissertation is on the use of mindfulness meditation in the practice of pastoral counselling. I will argue for the adoption of this practice by pastoral counsellors by presenting a theoretical ground for understanding this meditation practice and its effects, and by presenting practical suggestions for how to introduce this practice into pastoral counselling.

In developing the theoretical ground for understanding mindfulness meditation and its effects, I will draw upon transpersonal psychology as articulated by Ken Wilber and on process theology as articulated by John Cobb and other Claremont process theologians. Although there is great benefit to be found in the use of other contemplative disciplines, exploration of these disciplines is beyond the scope of this work. Similarly, it is beyond the scope of this work to address other psychological or theological schools of thought as they relate to this practice, or to any other.

Finally, I accept the premise that mindfulness meditation practice is effective in promoting psychological and spiritual healing and growth. While the review of the literature presented in this chapter and the introduction to the meditation practice presented in the third chapter will provide an overview of some of the effects of this practice, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive argument in support of the effectiveness of this practice.³

³I refer readers interested in exploring further the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation to the works of Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön and Thich Nhat Hahn listed in the bibliography as well as to the following works: Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh, eds., Mediation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984); Lisa Gevanthor Lasser, The Relationship of Cognitive Therapy and

Mindfulness Meditation: A Tool for Pastoral Counsellors

What, therefore, is mindfulness meditation? The introduction to mindfulness meditation presented here is not intended to be exhaustive. An in-depth discussion of mindfulness meditation will be presented in the third chapter. The aim at this point is to help the reader gain a broad perspective on contemplative practices in general and on the relationship of mindfulness meditation to these other contemplative disciplines.

The overall category of *contemplative* or *meditative* disciplines includes a vast array of individual practices, including mindfulness meditation. The words *contemplation* and *meditation* can call to mind a variety of images: a young man sitting motionless on a cushion with his legs crossed and eyes directed at the floor; a woman kneeling before a small copy of an ancient picture of Jesus; a student sitting with eyes closed and softly repeating the same word over and over. Meditation practices can be found in the spiritual disciplines of religious groups around the world, as well as in many secular settings. The forms and styles of meditation are as varied as the people practising them: focussing attention on an image, an icon, a mantra, a memory, a fantasy, bodily sensations, one's breath; use of chanting, or plainsong; practising while sitting, or walking, or eating. This

Mindfulness Meditation for the Treatment of Chronic Pain, Ph. D. Diss., United States International University, 1996 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996); John A. Astin, "Stress Reduction Through Mindfulness Meditation: Effects on Psychological Symptomatology, Sense of Control , and Spiritual Experiences," Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics 66 (1997): 97-106; Michael McGee, "In Praise of Mindfulness," Religious Studies 24 (1988): 65-89; Robert Murphy, The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation Versus Progressive Relaxation Training on Stress Egocentrism Anger and Impulsiveness among Inmates, Ph. D. Diss., Hofstra University, 1995 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1995); Stanislav Grof and Marjorie Livingston Valier, eds. Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

list is by no means complete. The common thread throughout all these practices is that they are exercises in focussing one's mind, be it on an object of contemplation, on a memory or fantasy, on one's own experience, or on one's relationship with that which is considered sacred.

The many varied forms of meditation may be seen to fall into one of two major types: those that use an object as a focus in the meditation practice, and those that do not. Meditation practices that use an object as a focus are *concentrative* techniques, in that the meditator directs focussed attention on a particular object, or action. Objects that form a focal point for meditation include: mantras (for example, in one form of Christian meditation the practitioner continuously repeats the Jesus Prayer; another example is Transcendental Meditation in which a word, or words are continuously repeated) icons, images, koans (as in Zen), Ikebana where the focus is on the flowers to be arranged, the Japanese Tea Ceremony where the object of attention is the action of the ritual, guided imagery, or fantasy. Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that is typical of the second type of practice, in that *no specific object* is used as a focal point for the meditation. Simply stated, mindfulness meditation is a contemplative discipline aimed at developing awareness.

In ancient times, forms of mindfulness meditation were practised in both the East and the West. The Benedictine discipline of *listening to the world* is one form of mindfulness practice that developed within Christianity. This listening is based "on the belief that God speaks through nature and history and the human heart is called to listen and respond.

Listening in this sense involves the whole personality—senses, thoughts, emotions.”⁴

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Quaker practice of individual and congregational silence is a Protestant version of this Benedictine spirituality.⁵

It has been in the East, however, particularly within Eastern Buddhist communities, that the most intensive and continuous use and study of mindfulness meditation has occurred. The Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhist communities have studied mindfulness meditation for over 2,200 years⁶ and they possess a substantial body of knowledge on the nature and effects of this practice. The contemporary teachers Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön, and Thich Nhat Hahn have emerged from these communities and each has worked to re-introduce mindfulness meditation to persons living in the West. Each of these teachers has extensive training in this practice as well as a significant understanding of Western society. In their work, they seek to present mindfulness meditation in a manner that is not dependent on an Eastern cultural context and is, therefore, accessible to Westerners. Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön, and Thich Nhat Hahn will be the primary resources used in this work for understanding the method and nature of mindfulness meditation practice.

Chögyam Trungpa was born in eastern Tibet in 1940. He was raised by Buddhist Monks of the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions. “He was trained from an early age as a

⁴Harold Coward, “Meditation,” in Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 701.

⁵Ibid., 701.

⁶Chögyam Trungpa, Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1984), 36.

scholar and meditation master to the level of khenpo— the equivalent of a Western doctorate.”⁷ He fled Tibet after the Chinese occupation in 1959. In 1963, he traveled to England and studied western philosophy and comparative religion at Oxford University. In 1970, he moved to the United States and in 1977, he “began to teach a secular training in how to live ordinary life in a profound and enriching way.”⁸ Central to this teaching is the practice of mindfulness meditation. Chögyam Trungpa was one of the first and most senior Tibetan teachers to bring Tibetan Buddhist practices to the West. Furthermore, he was able to present teachings on mindfulness meditation and its effects in a manner that was accessible to persons in North American and European cultures. In particular, his Shambhala Training Program presents the practice of mindfulness meditation without the use of Buddhist terminology, or reference to concepts relevant only within the context of Buddhism. Chögyam Trungpa died in 1987.

Pema Chödrön, an American by birth and Canadian by choice, is a Buddhist nun in the Tibetan vajrayana tradition. She attended Sarah Lawrence College and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. She became one of Chögyam Trungpa’s foremost students and is currently the spiritual director of Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia, Canada (the first Tibetan monastery in North America established for Westerners). She has taught extensively in North America, Europe, and Australia and is the author of several books.

⁷Jeremy Hayward, Sacred World: A Guide to Shambhala Warriorship in Daily Life (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), xvi.

⁸Ibid., xvii.

Thich Nhat Hahn is a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk and Zen Master who has written extensively on mindfulness meditation. He is the founder of Van Hahn Buddhist University in Saigon and the author of over 75 books. Recently he has written on continuing the dialogue between Buddhists and Christians.

The Value of Meditation for Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth

Two significant findings emerge from a review of the literature on meditation and on the use of meditation in pastoral counselling. First, there is reason to believe that meditation, in general, and mindfulness meditation, in particular, can be helpful in facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth. The second significant finding of the literature review is that, while there is little evidence that mindfulness meditation, in particular, has been used in pastoral counselling practice, the literature on object-centred meditation and on the use of prayer in pastoral counselling establish a precedent for the use of contemplative disciplines, in general, in pastoral counselling practice.

Roger Walsh states that “although the field of meditation research began only some twenty years ago, the current research literature is voluminous.”⁹ The volume of meditation research has continued to expand during the seventeen years since Walsh’s initial review of the literature. Researchers have explored measuring objective physiological, psychological, and behavioural variables related to meditation. Overall, “the general picture which is emerging suggests that meditation may enhance

⁹Roger N. Walsh, “Meditation Research: An Introduction and Review,” Journal of Transpersonal Psychology 11 (1979): 161.

psychological well-being and perceptual sensitivity.”¹⁰

Some of the *physiological variables* studied have been heart rate, galvanic skin response, metabolic rates, and brain physiology. Much of the early meditation research, in fact, centred on these gross physiological variables. Many of the early studies on meditation, however, did not differentiate between the types of meditation practised by the research subjects. Furthermore, many early studies did not differentiate between experienced and inexperienced meditators. This sometimes led to conflicting and confusing results. For example, some studies found faster electroencephalogram (EEG) rates during meditation, some found no change at all in EEG during meditation, and some found slower EEG.¹¹

As research into physiological variables progressed, it became apparent that different forms of meditation and different levels of experience with meditation would elicit different physiological effects. For example, James Corby et al. found that there were significant differences between the physiological effects produced in advanced practitioners of Tantric yoga meditation and in practitioners of transcendental meditation.¹² Transcendental meditation employs a technique of focussing attention on an

¹⁰Ibid., 162.

¹¹Robert L. Woolfolk, “Psychophysiological Correlates of Meditation: A Review,” in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 370.

¹²James C. Corby, Walton T. Roth, Vincent P. Zarcone, Jr., and Bert S. Kopell, “Psychophysiological Correlates of the Practice of Tantric Yoga Meditation” in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 440-46.

object in the form of a mantra. There is a wide variety of meditation techniques used in Tantric yoga. The Tantric meditators in this study also employed a concentrative technique. Tantric meditators, however, are advanced practitioners, and it is customary for individuals to be required to have many years experience meditating prior to being introduced to Tantric practices. The EEG picture of transcendental meditators was found to be similar to drowsiness, or stage 1 sleep, but the EEG's of Tantric meditators showed an increase in cortical activity during meditation. Furthermore, the results of their study indicate that Tantric meditators had mixed physiological responses during meditation. Some measures, such as increases in cortical activity, galvanic skin response, and decreases in stage 1 sleep suggest that they became generally more physiologically activated during their meditation. The heart rate of the Tantric meditators, however decreased. The control subjects (who practised transcendental meditation) became more relaxed on all scales.¹³ This particular study not only indicates the differences in effects elicited by different meditation practices, it also suggests that the more experienced Tantric meditators may experience increases in perceptive awareness while becoming more relaxed, one possible explanation for the differing physiological results.

Although several studies showed that when meditating, practitioners became habituated to external stimuli, one study showed that a particular group of Yogis failed to habituate on repetition of the same stimuli. In that study, it was hypothesized that the failure to habituate to repeated stimuli reflected heightened perceptual sensitivity.¹⁴

¹³Ibid., 444.

¹⁴Woolfolk, 370.

Richard Davidson and Daniel Goleman compared the effects of concentrative and mindfulness meditation and found that while the concentrative techniques led to habituation to external stimuli, the mindfulness techniques did not. Their study showed that the effects of mindfulness techniques were “suggestive of sustained cortical responsiveness to sensory events in conjunction with attenuated affective (limbic) influences on perception.”¹⁵

In 1984, David Holmes conducted a review of the experimental evidence on meditation and somatic arousal reduction, and concluded that based on somatic evidence alone, there was no justification for employing meditation as an antidote for high somatic arousal, and that there was no evidence that meditation is more effective in reducing somatic arousal than simple resting.¹⁶ As Deane Shapiro indicates, however, there are several difficulties with Holmes's review.¹⁷ The primary difficulty with Holmes's review is that he compared somatic arousal responses of meditators to the responses of individuals who were resting. This is problematic, because Holmes did not recognize that resting may itself be a form of

¹⁵Richard J. Davidson and Daniel J. Goleman, “The Role of Attention in Meditation and Hypnosis: A Psychobiological Perspective on Transformations of Consciousness,” in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 607.

¹⁶David S. Holmes, “Meditation and Somatic Arousal Reduction: A Review of the Experimental Evidence,” American Psychologist 39 (1984): 1-10; “To Meditate or to Simply Rest, That is the Question: A Response to the Comments of Shapiro,” American Psychologist 40 (1985): 722-25; “To Meditate or Rest? The Answer is Rest,” American Psychologist 40 (1985): 728-31.

¹⁷Deane H. Shapiro, “Clinical Use of Meditation as a Self-Regulation Strategy: Comments on Holmes's Conclusions and Implications,” American Psychologist 40 (1985): 719-22.

self-regulation of arousal response. In arguing that the somatic responses resulting from meditation are similar to the responses resulting from resting, moreover, Holmes actually adds support to the position that meditation can aid relaxation.

When looking solely at research on the physiological effects of meditation, one can conclude that meditation does produce physiological effects and that to some extent the nature of these effects is dependent on the form of meditation used. Regardless of the form used, however, meditation has been found to increase a person's *general* state of relaxation. Several studies have found that both concentrative and mindfulness techniques result in decreased rates of respiration and decreased oxygen consumption.¹⁸ In concentrative forms of meditation, this relaxation tends to lead to drowsiness similar to stage one sleep. One exception has been identified in the group of highly experienced meditators who engaged in a concentrative Tantric yoga technique. These meditators experienced increased cortical activity. In mindfulness meditation, however, the findings of increased cortical activity during meditation, alongside decreases in oxygen consumption and rate of respiration, indicate that while the subjects attain a greater sense of relaxation, they also maintain, and perhaps increase, their perceptive abilities.

Psychological variables studied have included such aspects as emotional lability, arousal, relaxation, perceptual clarity, sensitivity to psychological processes, altered time sense, altered states of consciousness, experience of self-transcendence and unity with others, reduced defensiveness, and degree of openness to experience. Experimental measures have shown greater perceptual sensitivity, increases in capacity for empathy, and

¹⁸Woolfolk, 372.

experiences of calm and non-reactive equanimity so that greater ranges of experiences can be observed and allowed without defensiveness, disturbance, or interference.¹⁹ Subjects of these studies have included hospitalized psychiatric patients, volunteers new to meditation, and experienced practitioners with extensive experience meditating.

In his review of the literature, Smith concluded that:

(a) Experienced meditators who are willing to participate without pay in meditation research appear happier and healthier than nonmeditators; (b) beginning meditators who practice for 4-10 weeks show more improvement on a variety of tests than nonmeditators tested at the same time; and (c) persons who are randomly assigned to learn and practice meditation show more improvement over 4-10 weeks than control subjects assigned to some form of alternate treatment.²⁰

Without exception, the studies he reviewed showed "the regular practice of meditation to be associated with decrements in psychopathology, particularly anxiety, over a period of time usually ranging from 4-10 weeks."²¹

Not all meditation experiences are positive, however. Several studies show that "occasionally some of the experiences which occur may be disturbing, e.g., anxiety, tension, anger, perceptual changes in sense of self and reality."²² One hypothesis is that these adverse effects may be the result of increased defensiveness to possible perceptual changes, emergent memories, or conflicts. A second hypothesis is that these effects may

¹⁹Walsh, "Meditation Research," 164.

²⁰Jonathan C. Smith, "Meditation as Psychotherapy: A Review of the Literature," in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 55.

²¹Ibid., 59.

²²Walsh, "Meditation Research," 164.

be the result of the meditators becoming more aware of their internal dynamics, as well as becoming more willing to report unpleasant experiences.²³ A third hypothesis is that adverse effects are the result of the emergence and release of previously repressed memories and psychological conflicts.²⁴

A fourth hypothesis is that some adverse effects are related to the meditator's psychological state prior to meditating. Following this line of thought, Richard Kohr studied the correlation between prior psychological states and meditative experience and found that "the only area where a prior psychological state demonstrated leakage into a meditation period was anxiety which was associated with having a negative experience. Thus, anxiety exerts a disruptive influence on meditation."²⁵ This finding has been reported by others, including Davidson and Goleman, who took it one step further in their conclusion that "high anxiety is a predispositional variable which appears not to be conducive to the practice of meditation."²⁶ Reports of these adverse effects are significant in determining how to use mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling practice and, therefore, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Finally, a number of studies have been undertaken to understand which effects of

²³Leon S. Otis, "Adverse Effects of Transcendental Meditation," in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 204.

²⁴Walsh, "Meditation Research," 164.

²⁵Richard L. Kohr, "Dimensionality in Meditative Experience: A Replication," in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 278.

²⁶Davidson and Goleman, 602.

meditation are modified by other variables such as personality, the background of the meditator, and the combination of meditation and psychotherapy. There are also a number of studies which examine the mechanisms by which the effects of meditation are produced.²⁷ Walsh's survey shows that mechanisms most frequently suggested are psychological. These include: "relaxation, desensitization to formerly stressful stimuli, heightened awareness, habituation, attention, expectation, deautomatization, cognitive factors, counter conditioning, insight, disidentification from mental content, regression in the service of the ego, and behavioural self-control skills."²⁸ Walsh's own hypothesis is that meditation is an effective method of dehypnosis. He suggests that it is possible that "our usual state of consciousness can be seen as a hypnotized state and advanced meditation can be seen as a process of dehypnosis."²⁹ In the following chapters, I will argue that several of the above listed mechanisms are at work, at least to some extent, in the practice of mindfulness meditation.

The vast majority of all of the meditation studies undertaken to date have employed transcendental meditation, or other object-centred meditation practices. While in each of the above categories there have been some studies that have employed mindfulness, or awareness meditation, Western academic research focussing solely on this specific form of meditation has been disproportionately sparse. As scientific research into the effects of meditation continues to develop, it is likely that we will see studies making sharper

²⁷Walsh, "Meditation Research," 168-69.

²⁸Ibid., 168.

²⁹Ibid., 169.

distinctions between meditation techniques employed and background of the meditators, as well as an increase in studies focussed specifically on the use of mindfulness meditation. Evidence of an increased interest in mindfulness meditation is to be found in the fact that in the past three years, there have been at least five doctoral dissertations and several articles written in support of the effectiveness and use of mindfulness meditation.³⁰

There is no lack of research on the effects of mindfulness meditation if one looks to the literature and teachings developed within Tibetan Buddhism. Their method of research, however, has predominantly been of the form in which researchers actively engage in the meditation practice, and then compare their experience with the experiences and reports of other experienced practitioners and teachers. The understanding of mindfulness meditation gained through these endeavours will be presented in the third and ninth chapters of this work.

In conclusion, a review of the Western research undertaken to date suggests that meditation practice, in general, is a useful tool in enhancing psychological well-being.

³⁰Lasser; Murphy; Patricia Martin Arcari, Efficacy of a Workplace Smoking Cessation Program: Mindfulness Meditation Versus Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions, Ph. D. Diss., Boston College, 1997 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997); Kelly Suzanne Johnson, Doctoral-Level Clinicians Who Practice Contemplative Meditation and the Implications It Has for Therapy, Ph. D. Diss., Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 1997 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997); Gregg Alan Richardson, Simply Being Aware: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience, Ph. D. Diss., California Institute for Integral Studies, 1997 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997); Thomas Keefe, "Meditation in Social Work Treatment," in Social Work Treatment: Interlocking Theoretical Approaches, ed. Joseph Francis Turner, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1996); John J. Miller, Ken Fletcher, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Three-Year Follow-up and Clinical Implications of a Mindfulness Meditation Based Stress Reduction Intervention in the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders," General Hospital Psychiatry 17 (1995): 192-200; Eleanor Rosch, "Mindfulness Meditation and the Private (?) Self," in The Conceptual Self in Context: Culture, Experience, Self-Understanding, eds. Ulric Neisser and David A. Jopling (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

This conclusion supports the exploration of using mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling.

The Use of Contemplative Disciplines in Pastoral Counselling

Pastoral counselling has always incorporated a variety of contemplative practices in its work. Prayer is one of the most prominent of these practices. Seward Hiltner, one of the founders of pastoral counselling, is reported to have supported the use of prayer in pastoral counselling, because it “helps to bring elements of the personality to the level of consciousness where there is a chance of dealing with them in line with the most basic purposes of the whole personality.”³¹ Historically, prayer has been seen as being able to facilitate the release of unconscious material, to help people grow in self-acceptance, to aid in decreasing anxiety, to encourage release from guilt, and to aid in relaxation.³² The many different forms or types of prayer advocated in pastoral counselling literature include prayers of confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition. These prayers usually take the form of monologues expressed either in silent thought or voiced aloud. The words of the prayer itself, as well as the one to whom the prayer is directed, become the object of attention. Assurances of pardon, affirmations, and blessings are all advocated as ways of affirming God's loving response to the client.

Several authors issue cautions, however, even while advocating the use of prayer in pastoral counselling. William Hume, for example, suggests that prayer

³¹John Sutherland Bonnell, “The Use of Prayer in Counseling,” Pastoral Psychology 4 (1953): 45.

³²Ibid., 45-46.

has been exploited as a way of escaping from the demands of serious dialogue. . . . Religious words have been used to stifle dialogue. Rather than deal directly with a counselee's resistance, pastors may seek to suppress it by taking on the authority role in religion. Retreating to the protected sphere associated with preaching, they use 'God-talk' -- religiously oriented words associated with the profession -- as an attempt to maintain control of the situation.³³

Howard Clinebell underscores this point when he argues that prayer and other religious resources "can be used in rigid, legalistic ways that arouse inappropriate guilt feelings and block creative dialogue and spiritual growth in counseling."³⁴ A basic tenet of pastoral counselling practice, moreover, is that pastoral counsellors will avoid imposing our beliefs on others and will show sensitivity to our client's religious beliefs. Clinebell suggests several guidelines for the appropriate use of religious resources in pastoral counselling³⁵ and concludes that when used appropriately, religious resources can be powerful tools for pastoral counselling.

The literature on prayer is so vast that it is not possible to present a comprehensive review of it in this work. It is clear, however, that when used appropriately, the contemplative practice of prayer is a valued tool in pastoral counselling work.³⁶

³³William E. Hulme, Pastoral Care and Counseling: Using the Unique Resources of the Christian Tradition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1981), 11.

³⁴Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 121-22.

³⁵Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 122-23.

³⁶ See for example: Hermann Knodt, "Counseling Through Prayer: Avenues of Divine Healing in Pastoral Care," American Protestant Hospital Association Bulletin 42 (1978): 116-19; Daniel H. Grossoehme, "Prayer Reveals Belief: Images of God from Hospital Prayers," Journal of Pastoral Care 50 (1996):33-39; Merle Jordan, "Prayer and Meditation in Pastoral Care and Counseling," in Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, eds. Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991); Nicholas C. Manikas, "Meditative Prayer and Imagery as Adjunct

Another area of interest in the pastoral counselling literature, which includes but is not limited to traditional prayer, is that of spiritual direction.³⁷ Within this body of literature we find an emphasis on meditative approaches to prayers. Whereas the more traditional forms of prayer tend to focus on self-expression through thoughts and words, the literature on spiritual direction expands the notion of prayer to include guided meditations and concentrative forms of meditation in which the person may be directed to repeat a short phrase, or even just a single word, for the entire prayer time. By and large, spiritual direction traditions view discursive thought as a distraction and an exercise to be avoided during the meditation/prayer time.

A general overview of the literature related to pastoral counselling includes a vast array of articles exploring issues relevant to the implementation of mindfulness meditation in the practice of pastoral counselling. The subjects of these articles fall into three broad areas of study: (1) the nature of Christian meditation,³⁸ (2) the relationship between prayer and

Modalities in Pastoral Counseling" (D. Min. thesis, Andover Newton Theological School, 1986).

³⁷See, for example: Roy W. Fairchild, "Guaranteed Not to Shrink: Spiritual Direction in Pastoral Care," Pastoral Psychology 31 (1982): 79-95; Joseph D. Driskill, "Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction: Enrichment Where the Twain Meet," Pastoral Psychology 41 (1993): 217-35; William J. Forker, "Psychoanalysis and Spiritual Direction" (D. Min. thesis, Andover Newton Theological School, 1994); Edward J. Putnam, "The Pastor as Spiritual Director: An Integration of Spiritual Elements into the Pastoral Model" (D. Min. thesis, Phillips University Graduate Seminary, 1985).

³⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Introduction to Daily Meditation," Weavings 2 (1987): 40-43; Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation," Buddhist-Christian Studies 11(1991): 123-38; Gabriel Aranjaniyil, "On Some Aspects of the Christian Meditation: Indian Theological Association's Criticism of the Vatican Document," Christian Orient 12 (1991): 128-34; Janet Janovec, "Christian Meditation: A Personal Sharing," Military Chaplain's Review 16

awareness,³⁹ and (3) the use of meditation practices for personal growth.⁴⁰ The articles on the nature of Christian meditation propose a variety meditation approaches that have historic precedence for use within Christianity. These articles offer theological support for meditation, while attempting to define which practices are appropriate for Christian use.

Fabio Giardini's article explores the relationship between prayer and awareness. He argues that a clear understanding of the nature of prayer is hampered by the shortage of words available in the English language to describe the vastly complex activity of the human mind. He argues that awareness of God is not limited to conscious awareness, but that one can also have unconscious awareness of God's presence. His work underscores the relationship between awareness and spiritual health and, thereby, lends support to my argument that increased awareness is valuable to spiritual healing and growth.

The articles by Marjorie Easton and David Monk present a variety of meditation practices from both the Christian and Buddhist traditions, and are aimed at supporting spiritual growth and development. These articles tend to be of the nature of motivational

(1987): 91-98.

³⁹Fabio Giardini, "The Conscious and Unconscious Mind in Prayer," Journal of Psychology and Christianity 6 (1987): 5-20.

⁴⁰See, for example: Marjorie Easton, "Introduction to the Practice of Meditation," Faith and Freedom 40 (1987): 27-29; "The Necessity for the Practice of Meditation," Faith and Freedom 41 (1988): 83-86; "The Practice of Meditation: Analysis of the Self to Deepen Spiritual Consciousness," Faith and Freedom 43 (1990): 121-23; "The Practice of Meditation: By the Use of Books," Faith and Freedom 41 (1988): 139-42; "The Practice of Meditation: The Devotional Use of Words for Deity," Faith and Freedom 42 (1989): 83-85; David Monk, "Meditation: In the Beginning was the Word (Mantra Meditation)," Faith and Freedom 45 (1992): 37-40; "Vipasanna Meditation: The Path of Insight," Faith and Freedom 50 (1997): 152-55; "Who Am I?" Faith and Freedom 46 (1993): 37-40.

material and contain little theological or psychological analysis. The variety of practices recommended by these authors suggest that they pre-suppose that spiritual disciplines are not necessarily culturally dependent and that there are commonalities in human spiritual experience that transcend culture.

Finally, there is a small, but growing body of pastoral counselling literature on the use of meditation and contemplative prayer for psychological growth. Earl Brown argues that "counselling and psychotherapy often call for the enspiritation of clients who present a picture of dispirituation, i.e., a malaise of spirit composed of dark outlook, flagging animation, and poor enterprise."⁴¹ He suggests that Zen meditation may encourage the relaxation of defence mechanisms, rest from the patterns of everyday life, and the attainment of a fresh "sense of one's solitary and singular self, one's elemental body, one's intelligent though thoughtless being."⁴² He concludes by suggesting two possible limiting factors: (1) the need for individuals to have already attained some degree of success in the outer world, before being able to proceed very far on an inner-journey, and (2) the necessity for a commitment of a considerable amount of time, discipline, and persistence, if individuals are to realize the benefits of meditation.⁴³ Even though he does not delineate what he means by success in the outer world, his recognition of the interrelatedness of internal and external realities is an important contribution to a theoretical understanding of

⁴¹Earl C. Brown, "Self-Change and the Humanistic Inner Journey," Journal of Pastoral Counseling 10 (1975): 27.

⁴²Ibid., 31.

⁴³Ibid., 31-32.

the nature of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. I will explore the specific nature of this interrelatedness in Chapters 4 through 8. His suggestion of the need for a high level of commitment lends support to my assertion that long term, growth-oriented counselling may be best venue for the use of mindfulness meditation.

Milton Ehrlich suggests that sensory meditation may be helpful in the practice of pastoral counselling. He describes sensory meditation as being “a process of exploring what we sense physically, and discovering how we hinder the forces of nature within us.”⁴⁴ In this article, Ehrlich presents anecdotal evidence from his own experiences with sensory meditation as evidence that meditation is able to help individuals grow in self-acceptance and self-love.

In presenting her argument that transcendental meditation may assist clients in creating balance between their inner and outer worlds, Eileen Schwenk relies on Jungian thought and personal experience.⁴⁵ In her view, mental health consists of an acceptance and integration of all aspects of the Self: including persona, anima, and animus. Although she relies heavily on the psychological theories of Carl Jung, she disagrees with his position that use of Eastern meditation practices among Western people is problematic. She argues convincingly that Jung's concern was with the lack of interest in self-exploration among Western people, and not with the effectiveness of meditation itself. Her contention is that the growing interest in self-exploration in Western society indicates that it is now

⁴⁴ Milton P. Ehrlich, “Self-Acceptance and Meditation,” Journal of Pastoral Counseling 11 (1976-1977): 37.

⁴⁵ Eileen Schwenk, “The Emergence of Self: Jung’s Theory,” Journal of Pastoral Counseling 14 (1979): 44.

appropriate to consider using meditation practices to facilitate mental health.

John R. Finney and H. Newton Malony examine yet another approach to the use of meditation in pastoral counselling: contemplative prayer. Their work explores the psychological processes active in Ignatian meditation practices. They suggest that contemplative prayer “can be described as an imaginative mental interaction between one's idea of oneself and one's idea of God motivated by more than just a neurotic flight from the unpleasant.”⁴⁶ They argue that although this form of contemplative prayer may serve to bring repressed material to consciousness, and although it may serve to lower one's state of arousal, use of this contemplative practice as an adjunct to psychotherapy is only appropriate with Christians, and only “when selfless love of God alone is a treatment goal of both therapist and client.”⁴⁷ In their view, use of Ignatian practices for any other goals would be “inconsistent with the Christian understanding of prayer as an act of self-dedication rather than self-seeking.”⁴⁸ The implications being that the pursuit of other goals would dishonour God, the individual, the practice, or the Christian faith. This is a much narrower understanding Christian theology and practice than I can support. A starving man eating a loaf of consecrated bread may not be participating in the Christian sacrament of communion, yet if satisfying his hunger is the best possibility he can actualize at that time, then eating the bread would do honour to himself, God, and the community

⁴⁶John R. Finney and H. Newton Malony, “Contemplative Practice and Its Use in Psychotherapy: A Theoretical Model,” Journal of Psychology and Theology 13 (1985): 177.

⁴⁷Ibid., 179.

⁴⁸Ibid., 179.

that provided the loaf.

The adoption of Biblical meditation in Clinical Pastoral Education is advocated by Piet Zuideest.⁴⁹ In this article, Zuideest describes an approach to meditation that combines silent reflection on scriptural words and symbols with guided daydreams, and followed by group discussion. He argues that this approach contributes to individual growth and creativity.

The use of centring prayer in pastoral care has been explored by both Cynthia Bourgeault and Sarah A. Butler.⁵⁰ Centring prayer makes use of a sacred word to remind practitioners of their intent to let go of thoughts and associations, and simply rest in the presence of God. These authors argue that in centring prayer, people are drawn into a human/divine collaboration, in which practitioners willingly consent to the presence and action of God within them. Butler suggests that it is “our intention of consent to God's presence and action within us that transforms us.”⁵¹ This position is affirmed by Bourgeault, when she asserts that “God is not found in the quiet *per se* [original emphasis] but in the action of consent itself, a consent to whatever emerges.”⁵²

The articles by Brown and Erlich represent the first arguments for adopting meditation

⁴⁹Piet Zuideest, “People Live on Symbols,” Journal of Pastoral Care 39 (1985): 328-41.

⁵⁰Cynthia Bourgeault, “Centering Prayer as Radical Consent,” Sewanee Theological Review 40 (1996): 46-54; Sarah A. Butler, “Pastoral Care and Centering Prayer,” Sewanee Theological Review 40 (1996): 55-61.

⁵¹Butler, 59.

⁵²Bourgeault, 52.

practices in the practice of pastoral counselling. They, like Schwenk, Finney and Malony, Zuideest, Bourgeault, and Butler focus on one form of meditation practice and explore how their specific practice may be valuable to pastoral counselling. The diversity of the meditation practices supported by these articles suggest the breadth of spiritual resources potentially available to pastoral counselling. Although the authors examine how their specific contemplative practice can aid psychological and spiritual healing and growth, they make no effort to situate that practice within the larger field of contemplative disciplines, nor do they attempt to suggest how meditation may be introduced into counselling practice.

Of the authors cited, Schwenk is the only one to engage in a discussion between meditation and a formal psychological theory. In so doing, she moves the discussion on the use of contemplative practices in pastoral counselling to engage a psychological basis for employing the practice. Though Schwenk argues that meditation may facilitate the emergence of the self, however, she leaves many questions unanswered. For example, she does not discuss how meditation is able to aid in increasing awareness of various aspects of one's self, nor does she discuss how awareness may facilitate the integration of the self.

Joseph D. Driskill provides an overview of meditation practice and he discusses the need for a coherent theoretical framework of incorporating the practice of meditation into the theory and practice of psychotherapy.⁵³ He suggests, moreover, that Ken Wilber's work "may provide a model for those interested in integrating the Christian understanding

⁵³Joseph D. Driskill, "Meditation as a Therapeutic Technique," Pastoral Psychology 38 (1989): 83-103.

of meditation with the behavioral sciences.”⁵⁴ He argues that Protestants need to rediscover the classical tradition of pastoral care and that this “might involve: (a) discovering the nature of contemplative prayer in the classical tradition; (b) seriously considering findings regarding meditation from the social sciences; (c) examining the importance of the Christian framework for meditation and; (d) exploring the possibilities for integrating these understandings into a unified theoretical framework.”⁵⁵ Driskill outlines Wilber’s psychological model and he reviews Wilber’s suggestions of how meditation, in general, may aid human growth and development. He does not, however, apply Wilber’s thought to a particular meditation technique. Nor does he discuss how Wilber’s model may relate to theology.

Conclusions

Pastoral counsellors rely on psychological and spiritual resources and methodologies to aid them in their work. Psychological research has shown that meditation is arguably a valuable tool for furthering psychological well-being. Studies of physiological and psychological variables indicate that various forms of meditation aid in enhancing a person's general state of relaxation. With concentrative techniques, this relaxation tends to lead to drowsiness similar to stage one sleep, but with mindfulness meditation, the greater sense of relaxation may be accompanied by an increase in perceptive abilities. In examining the value of meditation for pastoral care and counselling, the final group of articles provide the most direct support for the use of mindfulness meditation in pastoral

⁵⁴Ibid., 93.

⁵⁵Ibid., 100.

counselling. The findings from the various studies of the effects of meditation, as well as the historical precedence for use of contemplative disciplines in pastoral counselling, provide initial support for the central argument of this dissertation: that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their work to facilitate the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 sets out the working premises that I bring to this dissertation. Here I discuss: (1) the methodology I will use in this multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work; (2) the issues of cultural constructivism and cultural relativism and my approach to engaging in intercultural dialogue; and (3) how I will define key terms.

Chapter 3 provides an introduction to the practice of mindfulness meditation and explores the effects of mindfulness meditation from the perspective of the contemplative community represented by Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön, and Thich Nhat Hahn. These teachers credit mindfulness meditation with being able to help facilitate the emergence of various qualities that pastoral counsellors may view as being indicative of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. The effects of mindfulness meditation discussed in this chapter indicate why this practice could be a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors. If pastoral counsellors are to use mindfulness meditation in their practice, however, they need a theoretical framework that is able to explain how mindfulness meditation is able to bring about these effects and why these effects are desirable.

In Chapters 4 through 8, I develop a theoretical framework for understanding how mindfulness meditation is able to bring about the effects discussed in Chapter 3. In

Chapter 4, I argue that if mindfulness meditation is to be considered a useful tool for pastoral counsellors, the pastoral counsellor's view must include an understanding that the possibility for change is an indispensable aspect of the nature of reality. Moreover, their understanding of the nature of reality must be amenable to the possibility that awareness itself may be useful in enhancing the process of change. In this chapter, I argue for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality. Drawing on the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Ken Wilber, I advocate the position that all of creation is involved in a dynamic evolutionary process and that change, creativity, novelty, and dependency are inherent aspects of the nature of reality. In arguing for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality, I also contend that there is a *secret impulse* that draws creation toward increasing depth, intrinsic value, and consciousness.

In Chapter 5, I explore the nature of this secret impulse. I contend that God is intimately related to creation, that God has a will for creation, and that God's will is exercised through persuasive influence and is experienced as a 'secret impulse' luring creation toward the realization of increasing intrinsic value.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I explore the nature of human beings building on the understanding of the evolutionary nature of reality developed in previous chapters. Chapter 6 presents a basic understanding of the nature of human existence. Chapter 7 explores the processes by which the human psyche may continue to grow and develop.

The theoretical understanding of the levels of consciousness and the processes involved in psychological and spiritual growth explored in Chapter 7 provides a basis for discerning the nature of pathology and the processes involved in healing, the subject of Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 completes the outline of the theoretical framework that is used in support of my thesis that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to support the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients.

In Chapter 9, I discuss how the practice of mindfulness meditation may facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth. In this chapter, I build on the insights into the nature of reality, God's presence and action in creation, human growth and development, and pathology addressed in earlier chapters. I use the general insights presented in previous chapters to argue more specifically how mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate the development of awareness and how awareness potentially contributes to psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

Having shown the usefulness of mindfulness meditation for pastoral counselling, I discuss in Chapter 10 how mindfulness meditation may be implemented into pastoral counselling practice. I first discuss how and why pastoral counsellors themselves ought to engage in mindfulness meditation for personal and professional growth. I then discuss how, when, and why pastoral counsellors may introduce mindfulness meditation to their clients. Finally, I explore some of the difficulties in using mindfulness meditation as a tool in pastoral counselling and suggest some situations in which mindfulness meditation is not likely to be useful. In Chapter 11, I summarize the arguments presented in this work and raise questions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

Setting the Ground

Our reason for dialogue with others is not that we both participate in a common religiosity. Our common humanity, rather, is the necessary and sufficient basis for dialogue.¹

This chapter sets out the working premises I bring to this dissertation. Though there is some debate over the positions I have adopted, it is not my intent to argue for them. Rather, I will outline the ground on which I stand and refer the reader to relevant material in support of my positions. My working premises fall into four general areas. The first is the methodology I will use as I engage in this multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary study. The second focuses on the issues of cultural constructivism and cultural relativism and how to engage in inter-cultural dialogue. The third is a discussion of my use of terms. The fourth addresses issues of confidentiality and how I will use case study material.

The Nature of Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Work

This is an interdisciplinary work, involving discussion between the disciplines of pastoral counselling, theology, and psychology as they relate to the practice of mindfulness meditation. Process theology and transpersonal psychology, especially as articulated by Ken Wilber, are the particular theological and psychological schools of thought on which I will rely. There are two aspects to the methodology that will be used in this dissertation. The first might most accurately be referred to as multidisciplinary work, as it involves clearly articulating the perspective of each of the above-mentioned

¹John B. Cobb, Jr., Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 39.

schools, comparing and contrasting their understanding of the nature of person, spiritual and psychological healing and growth, and the nature of mindfulness meditation practice and its effects. Here the focus is on attaining a clear understanding of each perspective and determining where they are in agreement and where they differ.

The second and equally important aspect of the methodology is the effort to move from *multidisciplinary* work to *interdisciplinary* work. At this point, the effort is made to move each school beyond its own discrete boundaries, so that each is opened to being affected by the knowledge of the other. To this end, I will show how each of the schools have points of agreement and disagreement with the other and how each could be enhanced by contributions from the other. Furthermore, I will bring each of these schools of thought to bear on the discipline of pastoral counselling by showing how pastoral counselling can be enriched by the practice of mindfulness meditation.

Cultural Constructivism, Cultural Relativity and Inter-Cultural Dialogue

In this dissertation, I argue that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their work to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Although mindfulness meditation is a contemplative practice that has been followed in many cultures around the world, from ancient times to the present, the meditation teachers I rely upon in this work are from Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhist traditions. Given that the majority of pastoral counsellors and clients are North American Christians, I begin this work by presenting a discussion of the impact culture has on one's understanding of the nature and effects of the practice of mindfulness meditation. It is my position that it is possible to speak of universal processes of healing and growth.

There is some debate today over what impact culture has on understandings of the nature of reality and of person. This debate centres around two questions: (1) to what extent does culture actually construct reality and person? and (2) what approach may one take when confronting different understandings of the nature of reality and of person. These questions centre around the issues of cultural constructivism and cultural relativity.

Cultural Constructivism

Culture may be understood as the interiority of our social situation and, as such, it provides people with language, shared worldviews, values, and meanings. There is general agreement today that culture has a significant impact on how one perceives oneself and reality. As John Cobb has pointed out, we are conditioned by our personal and social history in every fiber of our being.² The impact of culture on shaping perceptions may even extend to the point of creating different modes of being.³ If we accept that culture has a significant role in shaping our understanding of reality, to what extent is it possible for us to speak of universal processes of psychological and spiritual healing and growth? Can we say, for example, that there are commonalities in the realm of mind that transcend culture? Or, is culture's influence so extensive that it precludes discussion of universally shared common traits? Are we left with the position that culture's influence on perception is so pervasive as to make meaningful dialogue between different cultures impossible?

Extreme cultural constructivists claim that objective truth simply does not exist, for

²Ibid., 14.

³John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

our ideas and knowledge are all constructed according to our various interests.⁴ Those adopting this position hold that culture's influence is so pervasive that dialogue between people from different cultures is difficult, even impossible. For example, people holding this extreme view would argue that not only are the meanings attached to the phenomena of snow different for a Canadian than they are for an American, culture's impact is so great as to make the snow itself different. In this view, there is no such thing as objective snow, only snow as it is experienced by persons of different cultures. In the same manner, there is no such thing as mind, consciousness, psyche, or spirit. These only exist as experienced by persons from different cultures and are constructed in substantially different ways according to each culture. If one were to adopt this position, it would not be possible to engage in cross-cultural dialogue, or to contemplate commonalities shared by humanity.

Extreme cultural constructivism arose, in part, as a response to the long-standing assumption that the worldview held by those in power was the only legitimate way of perceiving the world, and in part, as a response to the growing recognition of culture's role in shaping perception. Though few people hold to the extreme constructivist view, the significant impact culture has on human perception and experience is now undeniable.

I find Wilber's model to be a helpful approach to honouring the important role of culture in shaping reality, without embracing an extreme constructivist position. He contends that there are four aspects to any particular context:⁵ the interior-individual, the

⁴Ken Wilber, The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 25.

⁵ For an in-depth introduction to Ken Wilber's model see Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), 2-152. For

exterior-individual, the interior-social, and the exterior-social. In general terms, the interior-individual is the individual's consciousness. The exterior-individual is the individual's form. The interior-social is the realm of shared meanings and values, it is the realm of culture. The exterior-social is the exterior forms of social systems, "forms that also can be *seen* [original emphasis], forms that are empirical and behavioral."⁶

On the one hand, Wilber affirms the tremendous impact culture has on psychological healing and growth and states that "context-dependency seems to pervade every aspect of the universe and our lives in it."⁷ In working with the example of thoughts, he argues that

the cultural community serves as an *intrinsic background* and *context* [original emphasis] to any individual thoughts I might have. My thoughts do not just pop into my head out of nowhere; they pop into my head out of a cultural background, and however much I might move beyond this background, I can never simply escape it altogether, and I could never have developed thoughts in the first place without it.⁸

On the other hand, the fact that all thought, growth, and healing, exist within particular contexts does not mean that contexts are only constructed, nor are they necessarily radically relative. Culture is a significant aspect of the contexts that shape reality. Culture, however, remains only one aspect of any context in which we exist. According to this view of reality, culture (the interior-social) is but one of four aspects. Culture has a significant, but not exclusive, influence on reality. Furthermore, culture is dependent on,

an overview of the concepts presented in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, see Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 17-43 .

⁶Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 123.

⁷Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 102.

⁸Ibid., 103.

and influenced by, the other three aspects of existence. In Wilber's words:

some aspects of culture are most definitely constructed, and some aspects are both relative and historically bound. But many features of the human bodymind show universal commonalities across cultures. The human body everywhere has 208 bones, one heart, two kidneys. And the human mind everywhere has the capacity to produce images, symbols, concepts, and rules. The sturdy conclusion is that the human body and mind crossculturally share certain *deep structures* [original emphasis] that, when they appear, are everywhere quite similar, but the *surface structures* [original emphasis]- the actual manifestations of these common traits- are indeed relative, culturally bound, marked by historicity, and determined contingently. The human body might indeed have 208 bones wherever it appears, but not all cultures use those bones to play baseball.

The integral approach fully acknowledges and honours the richness of cultural diversity in surface structures, while also pinpointing the common deep structures of the human family.⁹

Within this perspective, it is possible to speak of some processes of healing and growth that are universal. When looking at the human body, for example, there is general agreement that bones grow and heal following the same process, regardless of whether a person is in Tibet, or in Canada. The processes of growth and healing are undeniably influenced by cultural factors, such as nutrition, and the demands made on the person's body, such as type of work and living conditions, yet there are processes involved in bone development and regeneration that are shared by all human beings.

To a considerable extent, the same may also be said about psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Though such healing and growth is undeniably context-dependent, human beings, regardless of culture, "share certain deep structures, that whenever they appear, are everywhere quite similar."¹⁰ According to Wilber, these basic structures in

⁹Ibid., 28.

¹⁰Ken Wilber has presented his arguments for an integral approach that recognizes both context-dependency and universally shared deep structures in several of his works.

human consciousness include, but are not limited to: sensation and perception, impulse and image, symbols and concepts, concrete rules, formal-reflexive logic, and vision-logic.¹¹

I find Wilber's position compelling for it recognizes the commonality in structures of consciousness shared by human beings, regardless of culture, *as well as* the pervasive influence of culture on the content and expression of human consciousness. Not only does the human body share common structures across culture, the human mind does as well. For example, unless they are prevented by disease or accident, human beings universally possess the capability of forming and using language, even though the words they speak and what they speak about will differ from culture to culture. Human beings also normally possess the capacities of sensation, perception, impulse, image, symbols, and concepts. Human beings, furthermore, universally share the developmental sequence of moving from pre-operational, to concrete operational, to formal operational thought. If they appear at all, the structures and order of their appearance are common to people around the world.

Based on this understanding of the existence of commonly shared structures of consciousness, without denying the impact of culture on the content or expression of mind, I believe it is not only possible but meaningful to examine teachings on mindfulness meditation derived largely from an Eastern Buddhist context in the exploration of how this meditation practice might be useful in facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth of North American Christians, in the context of pastoral counselling. I will rely

Particularly relevant passages are: Eye of Spirit, 24-25, 102-04, 304-06; Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 29-31, 32-78, 526-28, 633-35; Brief History of Everything, 17-121.

¹¹Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 141.

heavily, therefore, on Wilber's model for understanding the nature and development of human consciousness, as I explore mindfulness meditation as tool for pastoral counsellors.

Cultural Relativity

If we accept the position that there are certain deep structures that are shared by people everywhere, even though the manifestations of these common traits are context-dependent, we must still deal with how to approach different understandings of the nature of reality and of persons. If what is valued and held up as growth in one context, may be viewed as insignificant, or even as detrimental, in another context, are these different perspectives simply relative, or are there ways of speaking about processes of psychological healing and growth that are shared by the human race?

Edmund Bourne suggests that there are basically three different approaches one might take to systems of thought that are different from one's own: (1) an universalist approach, (2) an evolutionist approach, and (3) a relativist approach.¹² The *universalist* approach tends either to emphasize general likenesses, while overlooking specific differences, or it tends to examine only a small subset of the evidence while disregarding the rest. The benefit of a universalist approach is that it does enable the recognition of significant points of resemblance. The difficulty with this approach is that often in the quest to identify universals, variations are either dismissed, or blatantly misinterpreted.

The *evolutionist* approach attempts to order variety into a sequence of lower to higher forms. Bourne suggests that this approach generally relies on a three-stage rule for

¹²Edmund J. Bourne, "Does the Concept of the Person Vary Cross-Culturally?" in Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology, ed. Richard A. Schweder (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 114.

ordering: first, one locates a normative model; second, one treats that model as the endpoint of development; and third, one then describes “diverse beliefs and understandings as steps on an ideational Jacob’s ladder moving progressively in the direction of the normative endpoint.”¹³

The *relativist* approach seeks to “preserve the integrity of the difference and establish the coequality of the variegated forms of life.”¹⁴ Relativists, seeing context as primary, seek to understand the details of each situation. Relativists, however, hold that no point of view is inherently more valuable, or accurate, than any other. For them, any knowledge is a matter of consensus, the result of social agreement. The primary benefit of relativism is that it is able to ascribe validity to various different understandings, or points of view. The difficulty with this approach is that it provides no standard for criticism. With relativism, consensus becomes the final arbiter of what is real and, with consensus, “the powerful and/or the masses have their way.”¹⁵

Wilber presents a fourth option which he calls an *integral* approach. This integral approach is based on an evolutionary model that allows one to recognize universals, while encouraging the recognition of the existence of real differences, as well as the recognition of the context-dependent nature of the universe. In doing so, it attempts to combine the beneficial aspects of each of the positions outlined by Bourne.

Wilber's model for understanding psychological and spiritual healing and growth

¹³Ibid., 118.

¹⁴Ibid., 119.

¹⁵Ibid., 121.

incorporates findings from the human consciousness project. This project involves hundreds of researchers from around the world and is seeking to create a master template of the various stages, states, and structures of consciousness that are available to human beings. It involves, in Wilber's words, "a series of multidisciplinary, multicultural, multimodal approaches that together promise an exhaustive mapping of the entire range of consciousness, the entire sequence of the 'genes' of awareness, as it were."¹⁶ Although it is still far from complete, "the overall evidence for the existence of this spectrum of consciousness is already so significant as to put it largely beyond serious dispute."¹⁷

His model, however, is controversial. First, there is controversy over the hierarchical ordering of the proposed stages of evolution, or growth. Relativists, while wanting to acknowledge differences, want to hold all things as equal. They argue that stage theories cannot accommodate the varieties of human experience and they accuse stage theories of imposing an arbitrary ranking of values. In this view, any ordering of values is seen as inevitably leading to oppression and abuse of power. The charge is that stage theories reflect not reality, but rather the interests and values of those who create them.¹⁸ The

¹⁶Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 30.

¹⁷Ibid., 30.

¹⁸See, for example: Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Tarule and Jill Tarule Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (New York: BasicBooks, 1986). The authors cite examples of how developmental theories have historically been created by men, using male experience as the norm, and excluding female experience from descriptions of normative development. This has led to a skewed understanding of human development based on gender related values. Stage theories have come under fire by others who argue that their own particular values shaped by race, culture, gender, or age have not been taken into account by particular stage theories. See, for example: Earl C. Butterfield, Luann R. Albertson and James C. Johnston, "On Making

three major arguments raised against stage theories, therefore, are: (1) disagreement with hierarchical ranking itself; (2) concern that the linear nature of stage theories may not allow for the varieties of experience; and (3) concern over explicit and implicit value schemes embedded in hierarchical ordering which disregard, or undervalue, the totality of human experience.

The value of the arguments offered by critics of stage theories is the recognition that when articulated in a strict linear fashion, often with age limits to each stage, the cyclical nature of development is overlooked, and any adherence to other modes of being are devalued or seen as pathological. I agree with Wilber's response, however, that although there are some values, concepts, and idea systems that are simply different, but equal, it is not possible to get rid of hierarchies. He argues that hierarchical judgements involving “qualitative distinctions are inescapable in the human condition, and further, that there are *better* and *worse* [original emphasis] ways to make our qualitative distinctions.”¹⁹ He asserts that “trying to get rid of ranking is itself a ranking. Denying hierarchy is itself a hierarchy.”²⁰ I find this response convincing.

Making qualitative distinctions is inevitable, and distinctions do not need to be merely relative. In Wilber's model, distinctions between higher and lower are made on the basis of structural organization. For example, he places molecules higher than atoms on the

Cognitive Theory More General and Developmentally Pertinent,” in Memory Performance and Competencies: Issues in Growth and Development, eds. Franz E. Weinert and Wolfgang Schneider (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

¹⁹Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 30.

²⁰Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 29.

exterior-individual quadrant, because they are dependant on atoms: atoms can exist without molecules, but molecules cannot exist without atoms. Growth is seen as the movement from lower to higher levels, in which wholes at one level become parts of new wholes at the next. The higher levels do not negate the lower, but rather include and transcend the lower.

The same general rule applies to the interior-individual quadrant in Wilber's model, the sphere of consciousness. Wilber asserts that the higher levels of consciousness cannot exist if the lower levels are not already present, at least to some degree. For example, because the development of concrete operational thought is a prerequisite for the development of formal operational thought, formal operational thought is ranked higher than concrete operational thought.²¹ Furthermore, people must attain at least some degree of competency at each level, before being able to even perceive the existence of the next. The development of consciousness, therefore, may be viewed in terms of stages.

This model attempts to address the concerns raised by critics of stage theories by asserting that individuals need not completely master a particular level before being able to begin to function, even if only sporadically, at the next. It also recognizes that each level continues to exist, even when incorporated into a higher level, with the result that development is rarely, if ever, linear or static. People often fluctuate a great deal between

²¹Wilber presents twenty tenets governing holons, wholes that are simultaneously parts of other wholes, in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 35-149. He clarifies some common misunderstandings of these tenets in Brief History of Everything, 17-31. Although hierarchies are inevitable, he distinguishes between healthy and dominator hierarchies. A key feature of dominator hierarchies is that they act as though they are a whole, and not a whole/part. In these hierarchies, one aspect of the holarchy attempts to dominate the rest, to the detriment of all.

different levels, depending on the context.

Overall, however, there is directionality in growth and development, and this direction is towards increasingly complex levels that transcend and include the lower levels. Wilber contends that all the major world religions point to this directionality as being part of the *great chain of being*.²² His integral approach to the evolution of consciousness will be explored in greater depth in Chapters 4 through 6. The great chain of being will be explored in Chapter 4.

Within the working premises outlined so far, therefore, it is possible to speak of universal processes of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Even though our perceptions of reality and the possibilities for our existence are influenced by culture, there are common structures in the human body and mind that transcend culture. Furthermore, it is understood that there is directionality in the growth of consciousness. Although some differences within particular levels of growth are indeed different, but equal, differences between levels are qualitatively different and therefore carry differing values.

Definitions of Terms

The final issue related to engaging in an inter-disciplinary, cross-cultural work, is that of how to define key terms. I maintain that it is useful to make a distinction between psychological and spiritual. While the two terms are related, they are not identical.

Psychological refers to the dynamic aspects of the individual psyche and is inclusive of structures of personality and consciousness, ego, persona, emotions, inherited instincts,

²²Discussion of the great chain of being can be found in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* 6-15, 31, 526 (n. 4), 528 (n. 28). In brief, it is the theory presented by philosophers around the world that evolution moves from matter to mind to spirit.

the personal and the collective unconscious. *Spiritual* refers to the dynamic aspects of the Spirit, with Spirit being the essence of each and every thing that exists, both the highest goal of all development and evolution and the ground of the entire sequence.²³

The form of *mindfulness meditation* referred to by Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön, and Thich Naht Hahn is actually *shamatha vipashyana meditation*. The Sanskrit word for mindfulness is shamatha, “which literally means ‘development of peace’, but is sometimes used to mean ‘taming the mind’.”²⁴ Vipashyana is the Sanskrit word for awareness, “which is also translated as ‘insight’.”²⁵ Shamatha Vipashyana may most accurately be translated, therefore, as mindfulness awareness meditation. Mindfulness is “the attention to detail and settling of the mind that you need in order to begin practice. Awareness is the more global sense of space, openness, and clarity that develops out of mindfulness.”²⁶

When these meditation masters refer to mind, they use the term in a manner consistent with the Oxford dictionary meaning of mind being “the seat of consciousness, thought, volition, and feeling.”²⁷ This usage of mind refers to that which is beyond thought, prior to thought, yet is able to be aware of thought. That which is able to recognize thinking, feeling, and sensation is what is referenced by the word mind. While mind is able to be

²³Wilber, *Eye of Spirit*, 44.

²⁴Jeremy Hayward, *Sacred World: A Guide to Shambhala Warriorship in Daily Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 104.

²⁵Ibid., 104.

²⁶Ibid., 104.

²⁷“Mind,” *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5th ed.

conscious of thoughts, because it is able to be aware of thoughts and thinking, mind cannot be identical with the thinking function. Although mind is able to perceive thoughts, feelings, and sensations, it is not synonymous with intellect, emotion, or sensation.

Case Study Material

In this dissertation, I will present a variety of case study material. Those cases presented from already published sources will be documented in the text. I trust the authors of those studies to have either attained permission of the individuals involved, or to have significantly disguised their identities. In all other case study material, in order to protect the identity of the clients involved, I have not identified the source of the material and I have changed potentially identifying information offered about both clients and counsellors. In some instances, the clients I present are a composite of several clients and do not represent a single actual person.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented some of the foundational premises on which I will build in arguing that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their work to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Methodologically, as I am engaging in dialogue between pastoral counselling, mindfulness meditation, process theology and transpersonal psychology, I will be engaging in both a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary study. I will do so by articulating the perspectives of each of these schools, comparing and contrasting their views, showing how each have points of agreement and disagreement with the other, and how each can be enhanced by contributions from the other.

The discussions on cultural constructivism, cultural relativity and inter-cultural dialogue presented my position that it is possible to speak of universal processes of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. This supports my contention that it is both possible and valuable to examine teachings on mindfulness meditation, developed largely within an Eastern Buddhist context, in the exploration of how this practise might benefit pastoral counselling in a North American context. I accept as a foundational premise the assertion that there are certain deep structures in human consciousness shared by people everywhere, even though the manifestations of these common structures are context-dependent. I also accept as foundational the basic stance of Wilber's integral approach to understanding human consciousness.

I have also presented definitions of key terms directly related to my thesis: psychological, spiritual, mindfulness meditation, and mind. I will present definitions for terminology particular to concepts from process theology and transpersonal psychology, when those terms are introduced in later chapters. Although I have presented an introductory definition of mindfulness meditation in this chapter, because mindfulness meditation is the focus of my thesis, Chapter 3 is devoted to an introduction to the actual practise and its effects. Finally, I discussed how I will address issues of confidentiality and protect the identity of clients in my use of case study material.

CHAPTER 3

The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation: The Contemplative Community's Perspective

Our life is an endless journey; it is like a broad highway that extends infinitely into the distance. The practice of meditation provides a vehicle to travel on that road. Our journey consists of constant ups and downs, hope and fear, but it is a good journey. The practice of meditation allows us to experience all the textures of the roadway, which is what the journey is all about.¹

This chapter explores the effects of mindfulness meditation practice from the perspective of the contemplative community represented by Chögyam Trungpa, Pema Chödrön, and Thich Nhat Hahn. The two main discussions of this chapter are: (1) an introduction to the practice of mindfulness meditation, and (2) an overview of the effects.

The Practice of Mindfulness Meditation: An Introduction

Mindfulness meditation practice is considered a training process. The sitting practice is only one form of mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness practice extends into all aspects of daily living. The meditation teachers view the time spent in meditation as practice time for an increased awareness of life when one is not sitting. The aim of mindfulness meditation is not to attain a state of being, or an altered state of consciousness. “Nor do we practice it to free ourselves from pain or anxiety; nor even to discover basic goodness. We practice. . . simply so that we can be present in our lives as they happen.”²

The sitting practice is really quite simple: one assumes a sitting posture and notices

¹ Chögyam Trungpa, Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1984), 37.

² Jeremy Hayward, Sacred World: A Guide to Shambhala Warriorship in Daily Life (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 69.

whatever thoughts, emotions, or sensations that arise. As these arise, the practitioner recognizes them, labels them *thinking*, and returns the attention to the out breath. As the meditator breathes out, the meditator is to *let go*, to *relax in the space*. The instruction is to “[t]ry to feel that you actually *are* your outgoing breath. Acknowledge the gap between the end of the out-breath and the beginning of the in-breath, and simply let go. Don't try to continue to be mindful - don't try to check yourself at all. Just let go, and let your attention return to your body and posture.”³ All phenomena are simply noticed, allowed to exist, and to come and go without the meditator becoming attached to them, absorbed in them, or without shunning them. As one author put it: “Thoughts rise like waves and then disappear. Practicing meditation is like great scuba-gear: you can see, hear, touch, and taste your thoughts without drowning in them.”⁴ The aim is not to create a special state of mind, as Pema Chödrön states:

Meditation practice isn't about trying to throw ourselves away and become something better. It's about befriending who we are already. The ground of the practice is you or me or whoever we are right now, just as we are. That's the ground, that's what we study, that's what we come to know with tremendous curiosity and interest.⁵

In the sitting practice, one is encouraged to sit with an unsupported, upright spine: strong, but not stiff. The belly is allowed to be soft, open, and unprotected by slumped shoulders, or caved in chest. The person's eyes are kept open, with a soft gaze directed at

³Hayward, 70.

⁴Laurie Fisher Huck, Meditation for Kids (and Other Beings) (New York: Weatherhill, 1996), 33-34.

⁵Pema Chödrön, The Wisdom of No Escape: and The Path of Loving-Kindness (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1991), 4.

the floor a few feet in front.

People who begin this sitting practice usually become acutely aware of how many thoughts fill their mind. An apt description of a typical experience in meditation follows:

Sitting, breathing, . . . *Oh yeah. I can't believe Marlys said that about me . . .*
"Thinking" breathing, sitting, . . . I'll kill her "Thinking" breathing, sitting,
breathing, sitting, breathing, sitting, . . . with a gun "Thinking" . . . Better yet a
machete! "Thinking" sitting, breathing, sitting, . . . It's quiet here "Thinking"
breathing, sitting, breathing, sitting . . . Yikes!! I didn't get my money from Mrs.
Row and . . . "Thinking" breathing, sitting . . . WHEW!! That must be what . . .
"Thinking" breathing, sitting, breathing, sitting, . . . My butt hurts. [ad nauseam]⁶

No judgement, either positive or negative, is made about thinking. Thoughts, emotions, sensations, and other perceptions that arise are neither sought out nor shunned. They are considered to be neither good nor bad. They are noticed and allowed simply to be. Once one notices that one has been caught up in a train of thought, one simply returns one's attention to the out breath. "The label 'thinking' . . . simply marks the moment when you realize you are distracted and return to the breath."⁷ Through practice one learns to stay with the process with equanimity, awareness, and precision. Hayward describes it thus:

The thoughts that occur during sitting practice are regarded as natural events, but at the same time, they don't carry any credentials. The basic definition of meditation is 'having a steady mind.' In meditation, when your thoughts go up, you don't go up, and you don't go down when your thoughts go down; you just watch as thoughts go up and thoughts go down.⁸

This practice is based on the premise that all people have experiences and that human beings will normally have some potential to be aware of their experiences. Regardless of

⁶Huck, 53-54, emphasis in original.

⁷Hayward, 71.

⁸Trungpa, Shambhala, 67.

culture or background, the meditation instructions are the same for anyone who wishes to engage in the practice: notice your experience, when phenomena arise, whatever they may be, notice them, label them thinking, then follow your out-breath, and relax.

Some individuals may not be aware of discursive thoughts when they sit. Those individuals, however, will still have some awareness of their experience. Their experience may be visual: the texture of the floor covering, or the colour of their clothing. It may be auditory: the sound of street traffic outside, or someone else in the room moving. It may be physical sensations: a pain in the knees, or dryness of mouth. It may be emotional: irritation, anxiety, or boredom. It may be thoughts that are not recognized as thoughts: planning the next activity, remembering an event from the past, fantasizing about a relationship. It may be awareness that for a period of time one was not aware. Whoever the individual may be, however, he or she will have an experience and will possess some ability to be aware of that experience.

The instruction to return one's attention to the out-breath also relies on a universal human experience. We all breathe and we breath in and out several times a minute. If we are awake, we can notice our breath, place our attention on it, and follow it as we exhale. This simple, basic practice is about knowing ourselves and our own experience moment-by-moment. Though individuals will have different experiences when meditating in different contexts, this practice employs no culturally dependent symbols, concepts, or ideologies. It relies on the universal ability of individuals to be aware of their experience.

Overview of the Effects of Mindfulness Meditation

Inasmuch as there is a focus in this form of meditation, that focus is the individual's

moment-to-moment experience. According to Chögyam Trungpa, one of the most significant effects of this practice is that individuals develop an increased awareness of, and sensitivity to, their own experience. This increased awareness assists in the discovery of *basic goodness* and the awakening of *genuine heart*.⁹ Alongside these discoveries, the meditator may also experience (1) fear, (2) gentleness, (3) inquisitiveness, and (4) synchronization of body and mind. These experiences can in turn lead to (1) increased trust in oneself, (2) increased trust in the world, (3) tranquility, (4) joy, (5) humour, and (6) energy. In turn, these experiences can lead to a further increase of openness to oneself and others. Finally, this process can facilitate an increased desire and ability to serve the world. Each of these effects will be discussed separately below.

Each of these effects is intimately related to the others. The increased awareness and sensitivity to one's own experience is the predominant effect resulting from mindfulness meditation practice; all other potential effects stem from this one. Furthermore, there is an inter-relatedness between each of the other effects. All of the effects of mindfulness meditation are as tightly interwoven as hand-spun silk: pull on one fibre and many other fibres follow along; no single effect can be given clear precedence over the others. That being said, some general patterns do emerge among the threads. For the sake of clarity, I will discuss the effects of mindfulness meditation in the order outlined above.

Increased Awareness of Experience

In its essence, mindfulness meditation is awareness meditation. One of the first

⁹“Basic goodness” and “genuine heart” are specific terms used by the mindfulness meditation teachers relied on in this work.

experiences that meditators commonly become aware of is how easily they get caught up in a vast array of thoughts and fantasies. Until they began sitting practice, they had little understanding about the pervasiveness of this internal talk, nor did they realize how little control they have over the nature and content of their thinking. In describing his meditation experience, Roger Walsh states that the “entrapping power of the fantasies which the mind creates seems impossible to comprehend, to differentiate from reality while in them, and even more to describe to one who has not experienced them.”¹⁰ Anne, a meditator studying with Jeremy Hayward,¹¹ spoke of her early meditation experience thus:

I guess what I remember about the first day is the total surprise of having all these thoughts go on and on in my mind while I was focussing on my breath; and realizing that I wasn’t creating these thoughts - they were happening on their own. I didn’t sit down to think, I sat down to focus on my breath and go out with my breath. So that was a revelation just to realize that thoughts arise and move with their own energy.¹²

Noticing the internal dialogue is already a sign of increased awareness. With continued meditation practice, this discursive mind becomes more familiar. It becomes easier to let go of judgement over good or bad thoughts. One becomes accustomed to being carried away by a fantasy, only to try to break out of it and return attention to the breath. One also comes to recognize that labelling a fantasy *thinking* loosens its grip on one’s

¹⁰Roger N. Walsh, “Initial Meditative Experiences,” in Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives, eds. Deane H. Shapiro and Roger N. Walsh (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1984), 39.

¹¹Jeremy Hayward was a senior student of Chögyam Trungpa. He is a physicist, a meditation instructor, a director of Shambhala Training, and is the author of several books on science and spirituality.

¹²Hayward, 75.

attention, so the thought can pass through naturally.¹³

The internal dialogue often has an emotional tone or quality: there are, for example, angry, seductive, sad, or hopeful thoughts. From the seeming swarm of thoughts that capture one's attention, the meditator may begin to notice not only the overt content of the thought, but the feeling tone as well. Moreover, the feeling tone may be accompanied by a bodily sensation. For example, in one of my sitting experiences, a bird called from outside the window. As I heard the bird cry, almost instantaneously I felt my shoulders tighten and a train of thought began. I speculated on where it was and what type of bird it was. This led to wondering how much longer I had left in that session. I then realized I was thinking and directed my attention to my breath. It took several minutes, during which time I oscillated between puzzling about the time remaining and returning my attention to the out breath and relaxing, before I realized I still had a tightening in my shoulders. In noticing the tightness, I recognized I was feeling afraid. There was a subtle defensiveness in my response to the call of the bird. It is likely that outside of sitting practice, the richness of that sequence of experiences would have gone unnoticed by me.

Meditation helps people "look further and more precisely at who we are, where we are, when we are, and how we are as human beings."¹⁴ As awareness increases, one begins to recognize the habitual patterns one uses in relating to the world. These habitual patterns are often fuelled by fear and are described as being like a cocoon that "tries to manipulate your world to fit your expectation or manipulate your thoughts and feelings to fit the

¹³Ibid., 71.

¹⁴Trungpa, Shambhala, 44.

world.”¹⁵ Returning attention to the out breath and letting go encourages the recognition of the existence of space around these habitual responses. Hayward speaks of this space when he discusses basic goodness, which leads to our second category for discussion.

Discovery of Basic Goodness

Each of the teachers of mindfulness meditation speak of how experiencing basic goodness is a significant effect of this meditation practice. Chögyam Trungpa states “it is not an arbitrary idea that the world is good, but it is good because we can experience its goodness. We can experience our world as healthy and straightforward, direct and real.”¹⁶ Basic goodness is not spoken of as good as opposed to evil, or bad. Rather, basic goodness is good because it is unconditional, or fundamental. It is there already. . . . There is a natural law and order that allows us to survive and that is basically good, good in that it is there and it works and it is efficient. . . . It is natural and it works, and therefore it is good.¹⁷

Moreover, he explains that the discovery of basic goodness “is the realization that we can directly experience and work with reality, the real world that we are in.”¹⁸

While meditating, a man may experience thoughts coming and going, feelings of pain and pleasure arising and fading away, and he may have any number of dramas played out in his mind. Yet basically, moment by moment, he has no problem. A woman may feel depressed and be unable to shake the feeling, yet now and then she may notice a shift in

¹⁵Hayward, 78.

¹⁶Trungpa, Shambhala, 31.

¹⁷Ibid., 42-43.

¹⁸Ibid., 33.

her feeling, she may even recognize slight gaps or pauses in her depression. Yet as she breathes out and relaxes into the space around her, even her depression is not really a problem. This was an experience reported by June, another student of Jeremy Hayward, shortly after she began meditating regularly. She stated: “as I sat with my depression . . . I began to appreciate the sad, slow, heavy feelings and my lack of interest in the outside world. The process seemed natural and necessary to me, and basically okay.”¹⁹

The sense of *no problem* does not negate motivation to change, but rather it is an indication of beginning to let go of being fixated, or attached to a particular experience or point of view. When one is fixated, there is a narrowing of one's focus of attention. If the experience is that of pain in the knees, when fixated, that pain becomes the sole object of awareness and can block out any other perceptions or sensations that may also exist. The same is true with moods and with self-understanding. For example, persons fixated on depression may define themselves solely, or predominantly, in terms of their mood. Their attachment to depression can effectively block their awareness of how they are, in fact, more than that particular mood or problem. Experiencing the sense of *no problem* indicates the beginning of an experience of some degree of the spaciousness, which is one aspect of basic goodness. “In the ordinary sense, we think of space as something vacant or dead. But in this case, space is a vast world that has capabilities of absorbing, acknowledging, and accommodating . . . that is the primordial nature of basic goodness.”²⁰ Hayward describes the relationship between space and basic goodness thus:

¹⁹Hayward, 77.

²⁰Trungpa, Shambhala, 155.

[Basic goodness is] the vast open, creative, living space that permeates and illuminates everything. Without this space we couldn't see or hear or move or even exist . . . It exists prior to thought or the birth of anything. Everything is created from this space and exists in it. Each one of us is permeated by it. In it we live and move and have our existence. Living space is not an abstract idea; it is as close and intimate to us as water to a fish.

This profound level of basic goodness is hard to think about, but you can feel it. When people are crowded together, you see a crowd. When sounds are crowded together, you hear a noise. When your thoughts are crowded together, you get a headache. Your world closes in on you . . . When you allow the *space* [original emphasis] of basic goodness into your mind, however, your thoughts become illuminated-- as if you had turned on a light in a dim room. . . .

When there is silence around sound, you can hear each note. That is how the space of basic goodness can change your perception.²¹

It is the experience of basic goodness and the accompanying experience of space that allows individuals to experience their fear, to develop gentleness, sympathy, and inquisitiveness. In short, the experience of basic goodness awakens genuine heart.

Awakening Genuine Heart

As awareness develops, people are able to relax and see larger patterns in their own and others' behaviour. Some report, after engaging in mindfulness meditation, that they have found themselves experiencing strong surges of anger in response to small events that previously "they would have brushed off insensitively."²² To some the world seems sharper. They experience more of their own rough edges and more of the sharp points in the world around them. Some feel raw, awkward, vulnerable, and tender, and these emotions may elicit fear. When they slow down and relax with their fear, they find sadness, a sadness that hits them in the heart. "Sadness is often accompanied by

²¹Hayward, 11-12.

²²Ibid., 117.

tenderness, which in turn brings an open heart and genuineness— and this is profoundly joyful. Joy and sadness are inseparable.”²³ As they allow themselves to sit with their experience of sadness, they often “realize that human beings *should* [original emphasis] be tender and open.”²⁴ This is described as being the discovery of genuine heart.

Fear

Fear is one of the primary factors in how and why human beings shut themselves off from their experience of themselves and the world. Fear can take many forms. When people begin to practice mindfulness meditation, sooner or later, they experience fear. The objects of fear vary from person to person. Common fears are of losing control, of experiencing strong emotions, and of discovering shifts in one's sense of self. Expressions of fear in individuals' experience also vary: one may become restless, fall asleep, become angry, or jump from thought to thought. Fear is such a pervasive experience that Chögyam Trungpa suggests it is always lurking in our lives in everything we do.²⁵

Walsh states that one of the predominant fears he experienced in his meditation practice was the fear of losing control.²⁶ The desire for control and fear of the unexpected are what often drive our habitual patterns of relating to ourselves and our world. Anything out of the ordinary, or the slightest interference with these habitual patterns,

²³Ibid., 129.

²⁴Trungpa, *Shambhala*, 49.

²⁵Ibid., 48.

²⁶Walsh, “Initial Meditative Experiences,” 44.

brings an immediate response of fear.²⁷ In meditation, one becomes increasingly aware of both one's own habitual patterns and of one's fear that drives these behaviours. It takes courage and gentleness to sit with fear and to move through it.

Gentleness

Gentleness is both experienced and cultivated in the practice of mindfulness meditation. The cultivation of gentleness is linked to the technique of following the out breath. A more precise instruction of the technique is that "it's only twenty-five percent awareness on the out breath. The other awareness is less specific; it's simply that you're alive in this room with all the different things that are occurring here."²⁸ The instruction that only twenty-five percent attention is given to the out breath emphasizes that this is not a concentration practice. The breath, however, is very elusive;

even if you wanted to give it one hundred percent attention, it would be very difficult because it is so ephemeral, so light, so airy, so spacious. As the object of meditation, it brings a sense of softness and gentleness. It's like being mindful of a gentle breeze, but in this case it's our ordinary, uncontrived out breath.²⁹

Touching the breath with attention and letting it go is one way that gentleness is experienced and cultivated in this practice. The technique of labelling thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and sensations *thinking* is another.

Pema Chödrön states that "the moment when you label your thoughts 'thinking' is probably the key place in the technique where you cultivate gentleness, sympathy, and

²⁷Hayward, 83.

²⁸Chödrön, Wisdom of No Escape, 17.

²⁹Ibid., 17.

loving-kindness.”³⁰ The technique of labelling thinking as *thinking* is not intended to be judgmental, or critical; it is simply a technique that is used to help practitioners see what *is*. Chögyam Trungpa is cited as having said,

Notice your tone of voice when you say ‘thinking’. It might be really harsh, but actually it’s just a euphemism for ‘Drat!’ You were thinking again, gosh darn it, you dummy.’ You might really be saying, ‘You fool, you absolutely miserable meditator, you’re hopeless.’ But it’s not that at all. All that’s happened is that you’ve noticed! You’ve noticed that mind thinks continuously, and it’s wonderful that you’ve seen that. Having seen it, let the thoughts go. Say, ‘Thinking.’ If you notice that you’re being harsh, say it a second time just to cultivate the feeling that you could say it to yourself with gentleness and kindness . . . that is how this technique cultivates not only precision but also softness, gentleness, a sense of warmth toward oneself.³¹

Inquisitiveness

Increased inquisitiveness is another effect of mindfulness meditation. The practice itself is premised on inquisitiveness, on the desire to explore our experience and to understand ourselves and our existence. Gentleness, tenderness, and fearlessness enable inquisitiveness to expand. Increased inquisitiveness goes hand in hand with the ability to relax and trust one’s own experience. One finds that where harsh judgements and criticism may have previously been an automatic response, one feels a sense of curiosity, interest, or wonder. Even in instances when one is harsh with oneself, or another, this inquisitiveness can arise. At those times, one may recognize the critical tone of a thought, then wonder about the source of that critical tone, or what perception gave rise to that particular thought. Inquisitiveness thrives in an atmosphere of gentleness.

³⁰Pema Chödrön, Awakening Loving-Kindness (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 36.

³¹Ibid., 36-37.

Synchronization of Body and Mind

Mindfulness meditation works with awareness of both body and mind. The breath is described as the bridge that unites one's body with one's thoughts.³² Just as meditators become more skilled at noticing when they have been lost in thought, they also become more skilled at noticing when they have lost awareness of their body. Meditators come to recognize increasingly subtle sensations in their bodies, including: pleasure, pain, tension, trembling, tingling, discomfort, taste, smell, sight, and sound. Experiencing bodily sensations and perceptions is one aspect of the synchronization of body and mind, yet it is also something more than that. The *something more* has been described by Chögyam Trungpa in terms of looking and seeing, listening and hearing, or touching and feeling.

Sometimes, when we perceive the world, we perceive without language. We perceive spontaneously, with a prelanguage system. But sometimes when we view the world, first we think a word and then we perceive. . . . [e]ither you look and see beyond language - as first perception - or you see the world through the filter of your thoughts, by talking to yourself. Everyone knows what it is like to feel things directly. Intense emotion - passion and aggression and jealousy - don't have a language. They are too intense in the first flash. After that first flash, then you begin to think in your mind: "I hate you" or "I love you". . . . [s]ynchronizing mind and body is looking and seeing directly beyond language.³³

Increased Trust in the World

The world begins to be perceived as basically trustworthy. This does not mean that it becomes a place where everything goes the way one wants. Nor does it necessarily mean that one becomes more *comfortable*. What it does mean is that one begins to trust not

³²Thich Nhat Hahn, The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation, trans. Mobi Ho, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 15.

³³Trungpa, Shambhala, 53.

only in one's ability to accurately perceive oneself and the world, but one also begins to trust that the world is basically good (again, *goodness* here does not refer to good as opposed to bad rather, it is good because it is unconditional, it is natural, it works).

Some people are able to develop a sense of playfulness, or experimentation, with their actions in the world. As they recognize some of their habitual patterns of relating to the world, they begin to try other responses. In some sense it does not matter whether the new behaviours produce the desired results. Each effort is seen as a learning experience. These people come to trust that the world will respond to them and that they can learn from the world's response. The gentleness and trust they developed in relating to their experience while meditating begins to spill over into their relationship with the world.

Tranquility

Gentleness, synchronicity between body and mind, and experiences of basic goodness all contribute to the meditator discovering a sense of tranquility. This is not tranquility in the sense of disconnection from the world or from self. Nor is it the tranquility some might refer to when speaking of a trance state. Nor is it the sense that nothing is going on. Rather, what is referred to as tranquility resulting from the practice of mindfulness meditation is related to the experience that, moment-to-moment, there is really no problem. This does not mean that one no longer experiences emotions or moods that are often considered problematic, such as longing, pain, or anger. What is changed is the perception of these experiences. As meditators develop their ability to recognize the existence of space around these troublesome experiences, they find that they do not have to catch hold of them as one might catch hold of the tail of a dragon. They find they can

ride the energy of the experience without being overwhelmed by it, denying it, or fighting it. In that sense, there is no problem, and there is an experience of tranquility. Whatever their experience may be, they come to trust that they can work with it.

Joy and Humour

All in all, there is an increase in the experience of joy. Joy, humour, and delight, are all byproducts of genuinely connecting with oneself and with the world. As awareness develops, one can begin to relax and let go of one's struggle to control one's own experience and just be with life as it is. With this letting go of struggle, individuals often experience a feeling of freshness. One can begin to see patterns in one's own and other's behaviour. With this comes a sense of perspective that is often accompanied by humour and joy. Hayward records the experience shared by one meditator, Lorin, that illustrates the emergence of spontaneous humour and joy:

Early in our marriage, my wife and I sometimes got into some pretty ferocious fights. Somehow we seemed to be talking on completely different levels. We just locked into something that neither of us could seem to stop, once it got going. One day we were in a frenzy of shouting and insulting each other. I picked up one of my wife's favorite vases and threatened to hurl it at the wall. I looked across the room, and there was our black cat sitting on the back of the sofa, staring at us. At that very moment he yawned.

Seeing that cat's open, blank stare was like hearing a crack in my mind. Suddenly I realized how emotionally indifferent that cat was to all that was going on between us, even though he seemed to be watching us with intense curiosity. I felt an urge to laugh that was so strong, not even my anger could suppress it. I suppose I realized how comical the whole fight was. My wife stared at me for a moment, then she started laughing as well.³⁴

Energy

Energy is spoken of in at least two different ways by the meditation teachers: it is

³⁴Hayward, 107.

spoken of as being the essence of emotion, thought, and action, and as being the ground of existence. Hayward states that while our emotions are our energy, “emotions are not things we can possess or that can possess us. They are patterns of energy linking our bodymind with the world.”³⁵ The stages of this process are described thus:

As the emotion first comes into your awareness, you may have a sense of distance from it as if it were an external object. . . . [t]hen as you get closer to it, you can feel the ‘pulsation’ of the energy, as it gets closer still you can appreciate it, feel its flavor, and realize that you can handle it, as if you were smelling and tasting a good meal and felt ready to eat it. Finally you can touch the emotion; you feel the reality of the energy . . . you realize that you *can* [original emphasis] relate with your emotions, that they are not particularly crazy but just surges of energy. You can bite into them, digest them, and make them a part of you. At that point there is no separation between you and your energy.³⁶

The meditation teachers believe that emotional energy begins with genuine insight. For example, anger arises because “we actually glimpse something that is out of order in our world Passion arises because our senses are so wide open and we so appreciate another person Envy arises when in our gut we feel the richness of our world.”³⁷ In learning to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste emotional energy, one can begin to realize that one's emotions are workable, that emotions can be sources of accurate insight into the world and oneself, and that one has freedom of choice in how to respond.

The second way energy is spoken of by these meditation masters is as the ground of existence, or as vital life force. It is

both mental and physical, or, to put it another way, it is neither physical or mental in

³⁵Ibid., 120.

³⁶Ibid., 123.

³⁷Ibid., 124.

the conventional sense. It is mental because we experience it as unconditioned love, uncompromising affection that cuts right to our heart, and warms and nourishes our genuine nature. Yet this field of awareness is not purely subjective - it is *one* [original emphasis], a common realm shared by all of us and we experience its effects as the medium of subtle communication and energy. . . .[it is also] physical because we feel it as energy that enlivens our body and mind.³⁸

One of the effects of mindfulness meditation is that as practitioners grow in their awareness of themselves and their world, they discover the existence of this flow of vital life energy. Chögyam Trungpa links the discovery of this energy with the ability to let go. He states, "the result of letting go is that you discover a bank of self-existing energy that is always available to you-- beyond any circumstance. It actually comes from nowhere, but is always there. It is the energy of basic-goodness."³⁹

Connecting with this energy has some very tangible results. Walsh reports that for him, one of those results has been a dramatic change in the amount of sleep he needs. "At the present time I usually need only four - five hours and find that I have more energy than when I was getting eight."⁴⁰ The most significant result of connecting with this energy, however, is that it inspires persons to be more open to themselves and to their world.

Increased Openness to Oneself and Others

Through the practice of mindfulness meditation, one discovers that basic goodness flows through all phenomena. It is not a personal possession to be collected, guarded, and protected. Any effort to grasp or cling to it is like trying to catch the wind. In learning to

³⁸Ibid., 23-24.

³⁹Trungpa, Shambhala, 84.

⁴⁰Walsh, "Initial Meditative Experiences," 35.

relax and trust in basic goodness, meditators discover that their fear is workable, that they can move through fear, and therefore, do not need to hold on so tightly to fear to protect themselves. Inquisitiveness nudges them to open to experience, so that they move from first seeing their experience, to hearing, touching, and tasting it. In developing sensitivity to their perceptions, they can come to trust in their perceptions of themselves and of the world. Their enhanced sensitivity to their own emotional world enables them to become more sensitive to the suffering of others. As they are able to touch and ride the energy that flows through their own beings without being overwhelmed, they become increasingly willing to be moved and affected by other people.

The meditation technique of labelling thoughts *thinking* helps you

step beyond your fear, the ups and downs of your thinking process. You can just be, without holding on to the constant reference points that the mind manufactures . . . [w]hen you let yourself go in this way, you develop trust in the strength of your being and trust in your ability to open and extend yourself to others.⁴¹

Increased Desire and Ability to Serve the World

Mindfulness meditation ultimately leads practitioners to connect at increasingly deep and profound ways with the world around them. As Walsh states,

[t]o anyone who continues the journey for more than a little way, it rapidly becomes clear that selfishness is problematic. [There is a] collapse of the self/other, me-or-you dichotomy, because this type of service benefits both the giver and receiver. We go into ourselves to more effectively go into the world. We go out into the world to more effectively go into ourselves.⁴²

The processes involved when meditators connect on deeper levels with their moment-

⁴¹Trungpa, Shambhala, 68.

⁴²Walsh, “Initial Meditative Experiences,” 52.

to-moment experience are similar to those involved when meditators increasingly connect with the world around them. Just as fear is often at the heart of a person's inability to recognize the spaciousness that exists in the midst of experience, fear is also often at the heart of selfishness, unwillingness, or inability to extend oneself to others. Mindfulness meditation helps individuals develop the ability to move beyond their fear. As meditators come to know that they can just be, without holding on to the constant reference points that mind manufactures, they also come to know that they do not have to get rid of their thoughts. They can let their thoughts come and go *and* they can relax and let themselves go out with the breath and let it dissolve. "When you let yourself go in that way, you develop trust in the strength of your being and trust in your ability to open and extend yourself to others. You realize you are rich and resourceful enough to give selflessly to others, and as well, you find you have tremendous willingness to do so."⁴³

Summary

This chapter has described various effects attributed to mindfulness meditation from the perspective of the contemplative community. In this view, mindfulness meditation aims at increasing one's awareness of one's own experience. The teachers of this meditation practice credit it with being able to help facilitate the emergence of various qualities that pastoral counsellors may view as being indicative of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Each of the effects of mindfulness meditation discussed in this chapter is related to each of the others. Although there is not a strictly linear relationship between the various effects of mindfulness meditation, experiences of fear,

⁴³Trungpa, Shambhala, 68.

gentleness, inquisitiveness, and a synchronization of body and mind tend to emerge prior to the development of an increased trust in oneself, increased trust in the world, tranquility, joy, humour, and energy. In general, these experiences then tend to facilitate an increased openness to oneself and an increased desire and ability to serve the world. The relationship between these effects tends to be holographic. For example, greater awareness of one's experience can lead to a synchronization of body and mind, resulting in an increased trust in oneself and increased openness. In turn, experiences of increased openness to oneself may lead to experiences of fear, which in turn may lead to further inquisitiveness and result in greater general awareness.

We may understand the effects of mindfulness meditation discussed in this chapter as indicative of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. If pastoral counsellors are to use mindfulness meditation in their practice, however, they need a theoretical framework that can explain how mindfulness meditation can bring about these effects and why these effects are desirable. In Chapters 4 through 8, I develop this needed psychological and theological framework.

CHAPTER 4

An Evolutionary View of Reality

The first time that life occurred on our planet, life was already a possibility, but it had never yet become part of the process, it had not become actuality. So there is novelty in the world we are talking about, the world of process.¹

The profession of pastoral counselling aims at helping people in their quest for healing and growth. Individuals seek the assistance of pastoral counsellors because they are experiencing some difficulty in their lives, and they hope and believe that change is possible. The aim of pastoral counsellors to help people in their quest for healing and growth also presupposes that change is a possibility. An understanding of the nature of change, therefore, is crucial to any theoretical framework undergirding the practice of pastoral counselling. I suggest, furthermore, that our understanding of the nature of reality has a direct bearing on our recognition of possibilities for change and the processes that may be involved in facilitating the changes sought through pastoral counselling.

Decisions regarding how, when, and why pastoral counsellors choose to use specific approaches in their work will inevitably be based on their understanding of the nature of change. The thesis of this dissertation is that mindfulness meditation is a useful tool for pastoral counsellors. Mindfulness meditation aims at increasing awareness. If it is to be considered a useful tool for pastoral counsellors, two fundamental requirements must be met. First, pastoral counsellors must recognize change as an inherent aspect of the nature of reality. Second, their view of reality must be amenable to the possibility that awareness

¹Attributed to David R. Griffin, cited in John Regan, S.M. Lamb, John B. Cobb, Jr., David R. Griffin, and Arabinda Basu, Whitehead and Lamb: A New Network of Connection (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate School, 1982), 34.

itself may be useful in enhancing change.

This chapter will argue for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality. Drawing on the work of Alfred North Whitehead and other process thinkers, as well as on the work of transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber, I argue that the possibility for change is an inherent aspect of the nature of reality. I will rely on this discussion when I develop a working understanding of the nature of human growth and development in Chapter 7, the nature of pathology in Chapter 8, and when I discuss how mindfulness meditation and increased awareness may facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth, the subject of Chapter 9.

The argument for adopting an evolutionary view of the nature of reality serves a second and equally important role in supporting my thesis. If pastoral counsellors aim at helping people in their quest for psychological and spiritual healing and growth, not only must their view of the nature of reality provide them with a basis for conceptualizing the nature of possible change; it must also provide them with a basis for discerning the nature of healing and growth. Healing and growth are comparative terms: both presuppose some form of ordering, be it from less to more developed, from unwell to well, or from less healthy to more healthy. To determine that something is in need of healing one must presuppose possible differences between *what is* and *what might be, could be, even ought to be*. Healing and growth presuppose an ordering of qualitative and quantitative differences. The ordering one uses to support one's use of the terms healing and growth is necessarily dependent upon how one views the nature of reality.

The argument for adopting an evolutionary view of the nature of reality becomes the

foundation from which I will argue for the nature of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. A central element in this view of the evolutionary nature of reality is that of the directionality and ordering of value in creation. This ordering of value provides a yardstick against which pastoral counsellors can assess the need for healing and the direction of growth. The discussion on directionality in evolution will be developed further in Chapter 5, when I explore the relationship of God to creation. I will return to these discussions in Chapter 8, with the exploration of pathology, and in Chapters 9 and 10, when I explore how mindfulness meditation may facilitate healing and growth, and how this practice may be used in pastoral counselling.

What Is Meant by Evolution

Several components make up the definition of evolution used in this work. The first is that creation is constantly changing: it is not stagnant, stationary, once created ever the same. What we know of reality is that entities appear and disappear; forms, species, and ways of being come into existence, change, and perish. In brief, creation is dynamic. The second part of the definition is related to the first: not only is creation dynamic, it is ongoing. The entities that appear and disappear in creation are not always mere repetitions of their predecessors. The evolutionary view of the nature of reality recognizes the existence of development arising from earlier forms.² This means that some entities depend on the prior existence of other entities before they can come into being. It also means that there is newness, or novelty, in creation. The third component of this definition is that the change, movement, novelty, and process at the heart of the reality is

²“Evolution,” The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 5th ed.

not entirely random; there is a directionality, or an ordering of value, in the midst of creation. Both process theology and transpersonal psychology support and contribute to this understanding of the evolutionary nature of reality.

The Dynamic Nature of Creation

The first component of an evolutionary view of the universe is that of change. If we are to adopt an evolutionary view of the nature of reality, we must accept that change is not only possible, but that it is inherent in the nature of existence. For centuries it was believed that creation was composed of basic building blocks that joined together in various combinations to form the natural world. These basic building blocks were believed to be solid, enduring, and unchanging. Modern physics has shattered that belief. In the search for a basic building block, physicists have examined increasingly smaller components of creation and have discovered that inasmuch as there is a basic unit in creation, it is dynamic energy and not stable, solid, matter as had previously been thought.

Although the implications of this discovery are too numerous to explore here, one implication of particular importance for my thesis is that worldviews based on an understanding of enduring and unchanging matter are no longer tenable. At the very least, a credible view of the nature of reality must be consistent with current scientific knowledge. Philosophical, theological, and psychological understandings of the nature of reality that are unable to accommodate such knowledge can no longer be considered credible.

Alfred North Whitehead developed a philosophical school of thought that is consistent with both current scientific knowledge and with lived experience. In his view, creation is continually in a state of process and *that process* is the process of becoming. In his

philosophy, the basic units of creation are not things that *have* energy, but rather they are moments of experience that *are* energy.³ He calls these moments of experience *actual entities*, or *actual occasions* (the terms are used interchangeably). According to John Buchanan, "Whitehead's actual entities are vital, transient 'drops of experience, complex and interdependent.'"⁴

Like previous atomistic views of reality, Whitehead's model contends that there are basic units from which all of creation is formed. Unlike earlier views, Whitehead's actual occasions are not inert, or imperishable. The transitory nature of Whitehead's basic unit is suggested by the term *actual occasion*. Actual occasions come into being and then perish. As soon as any actual entity has come into existence, it is no more. The present is perpetually perishing, and moments past become fodder for moments that are emerging.

Whitehead's view of the nature of reality places change and creativity at the heart of creation. As we shall see in the following discussions, nothing is solid and unchanging. Everything is always in process, for the units that make up all of creation are themselves always in process. Change, as the continual emergence and perishing of momentary experience, is inherent to the nature of reality. In other words, creation is vibrant and dynamic. This is true for both rocks and human beings, for both are composed of actual occasions of experience, and as such, both are a part of a dynamic and changing creation.

In the case of human beings, the actual occasions that make up our beings have banded

³David Ray Griffin, "Whitehead and Niebuhr on God, Man and the World," *Journal of Religion* 53 (1973): 162-63.

⁴John Buchanan, Universal Feeling: Whitehead and Psychology, Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1994 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 89.

together in a rather complex form. I will discuss the nature of human beings in greater detail in Chapter 6. For my purpose here, it is sufficient to say that the countless actual occasions that make up a human being emerge into existence and, in their perishing, are able to influence subsequent occasions to actualize qualities similar to their own. The appearance of stability, solidity, and permanence is created as one occasion passes on to subsequent occasions the desire to actualize similar qualities. In this way, there is a degree of similarity between successive actual occasions. All of the actual occasions that make up each proton, electron, neutron, atom, molecule, cell, tissue, and organ, however, are still only momentary flashes of experience, which emerge into being and then immediately perish. This is good news for pastoral counsellors, because unless the influence of one actual occasion on subsequent actual occasions is completely deterministic (I will argue that it is not), then there is enormous potential for change within each human being.

Ongoing Creation: The World is Self-Creative

The second aspect of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality is that the world is self-creative and that creation is ongoing. There are two facets to this assertion. The first is that there is real novelty in creation and that change in creation is not always mere repetition of what has gone on before. The second is the recognition of the existence of development arising from earlier forms. The self-creative aspect of the nature of existence relies on the interplay between novelty and dependency.

The Emergence of Novelty. We know that within creation there is the emergence of novelty. New forms, species, and ways of being come into existence, change, and perish. Whitehead and Wilber are both able to provide help in our effort to understand how and

why this is so.

From Whitehead's perspective, the potential for novelty exists in the process of formation of every actual occasion. Each actual occasion participates in its own creation by choosing which of the various possibilities present it will actualize. Novelty arises by the particular way an emerging actual occasion prehends and actualizes the data present to it. These data include all other past actual occasions, as well as eternal objects.⁵ David Griffin describes this process in the following way:

Every actual occasion is an emergent unity, with some degree of freedom, or self-determination. Each becoming occasion is faced with a variety of possibilities, so that the occasion that actually emerges is merely one member of a class of possible occasions that could have occurred. And there is always some degree of novelty in each occasion.⁶

The existence of possibilities and of novelty is also good news for pastoral counsellors, for it means that change is not only an inherent aspect of creation, but that change is not limited to entirely predetermined patterns of being. The reality in which we exist is not one in which occasions of experience simply emerge and perish, continually repeating various combinations of what has gone on before. Rather, it is a reality in which

[t]he ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one.⁷

⁵I will discuss eternal objects in detail in Chapter 5 when I examine the relationship of God to creation.

⁶Griffin, "Whitehead and Niebuhr," 160-61.

⁷Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology, corrected ed., eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Shelburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 21.

Wilber speaks of this potential for novelty as the capacity for self-transcendence. Whereas Whitehead looks at actual occasions as being what are *really real* in creation, Wilber sees *holons* as the basic units of existence. Whitehead and Wilber agree that creation is inherently interrelated. Whitehead's whole position, in fact, is based on the reality of internal relations. I find Wilber's concept of the holon to be particularly helpful, however, for two reasons. First, it underscores the interrelated nature of reality. Second, because the tenets governing holons⁸ are as applicable to the simplest entity as they are to the most complex, they provide an easily transferable understanding of processes shared by various aspects of reality. The tenets governing holons, furthermore, provide an understanding of the nature of change that I will rely on in developing an understanding of the order and directionality in the evolution of consciousness.

Drawing on the work of Arthur Koestler, Wilber adopts the concept of the holon, which refers to "that which, being *whole* in one context, is similarly a *part* of another."⁹ By definition a holon is not an isolated unit. Although very similar, there are some significant differences between the concepts of actual occasions and holons. Actual occasions, the pulses of energy or experience that come into being and then perish, are the entities from which all else in creation is made. Inasmuch as each actual occasion is whole, being one occasion of experience, and also part, being intimately connected with other actual occasions past and present, each actual occasion is also a holon. The term

⁸Wilber lists twenty general tenets of holons. A complete description of these tenets may be found in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), 35-78.

⁹Ibid., 18, emphasis in original.

holon, however, is not limited to individual occasions of experience. Clusters of actual occasions, which Whitehead refers to as societies, are also aptly referred to as holons. An atom, for example, is a whole, yet it is also a part of the larger molecule. Just as the molecule is a part of the organ, the organ is a part of the body. The same is true of time: this moment is a whole, yet it is also a part of all that has been.

Wilber argues that all holons display four fundamental capacities: self-preservation, self-adaptation, self-transcendence, and self-dissolution.¹⁰ These four capacities indicate the basis for both the stable and the self-creative nature of reality. The capacity for self-preservation means that “although holons exist by *virtue* of their interlinking relationships or context, they are not *defined* by their context but rather by their own individual form, pattern, or structure.”¹¹ Inasmuch as a holon is able to preserve its own individual pattern, it is a whole. Self-adaptation, on the other hand, points to the “partness” of a holon “displayed in its capacity to accommodate, to register other holons, to fit into its existing environment. . . . As a *whole*, it remains itself; as a *part*, it must fit in.”¹²

The self-transcendent capacity of holons allows for the emergence of new holons. “In self-adaptation or communion, one finds oneself to be *part of a larger whole*; in self-transformation one *becomes a new whole*, which has its own new forms of agency.”¹³ Furthermore, the new forms of agency and communion “emerge through symmetry

¹⁰Ibid., 40.

¹¹Ibid., 40-41, emphasis in original.

¹²Ibid., 41, emphasis in original.

¹³Ibid., 42, emphasis in original.

breaks, through the introduction of new and creative twists in the evolutionary stream.

There is not only *continuity* in evolution, there are important *discontinuities* as well.”¹⁴

Holons not only emerge, have some capacity for self-preservation, adaptation, and transformation, they also dissolve, or break down. When holons dissolve, they tend to do so along the same sequence in which they were built up, only in reverse order.

We know from experience that change and creativity are part of the nature of reality. Scientific evidence also exists for the idea that novelty is a part of creation. The exploration of process thought asserted that the potentials for change and novelty are inherent to the processes by which the basic units of existence, actual occasions, come into being. Moreover, the potential for self-transcendence exists not only within the formation of the basic units of existence, it exists throughout the entire spectrum of existence.

For pastoral counsellors, this means that the changes our clients seek may well be possible. If change and the potential for novelty are inherent to the basic units that make up existence, then that potential permeates all that is and the possibility for self-transcendence extends to all entities, including our clients and ourselves.

In this evolutionary view of the nature of reality, no entity exists in isolation. No matter how complex or how simple an entity may be, it always exists in relationship with other entities. The capacity for self-transcendence, moreover, exists in a dynamic interplay with three other capacities: self-preservation, self-adaptation, and self-dissolution. In any entity, all four of these capacities are influenced by that entity's relationship with other entities. This leads to the second facet of the assertion that the world is self-creative: the

¹⁴Ibid., 43, emphasis in original.

recognition of dependency and determinism in creation.

Dependence and Determinism. All of reality is “bound together by a general type of relatedness which constitutes it into an extensive continuum.”¹⁵ This relatedness is the source of both dependency and determinism. Even though there is freedom in creation, there is also dependency. Even though there is a degree of self-determination, there is also determination by others. This is true for every entity along the extensive continuum of existence. This section will present a brief examination of the continuum of existence, from actual occasions to human beings, to show *how* the elements of dependency and determinism exist in creation.

Wilber's adoption of the concept of the holon emphasizes the interrelated nature of creation. Nothing exists in isolation. Even the basic units of existence, Whitehead's actual occasions, may be understood to be holons: wholes that are also parts. Actual occasions come into being by including and excluding various items of the universe in their process of becoming: the process of becoming is one in which actual occasions prehend,¹⁶ positively or negatively, items in the universe and choose to actualize particular possibilities from the variety of possibilities present. Inasmuch as all actual occasions take

¹⁵Whitehead, Process and Reality, 96.

¹⁶Although I will explore prehensions in greater depth in later chapters, in Process and Reality, Whitehead presents the understanding that there are two types of prehensions: “the ‘positive species’ and the ‘negative species’. An actual entity has a perfectly definite bond with each item in the universe. This determinate bond is its prehension of that item. A negative prehension is the definite exclusion of that item from positive contribution to the subject's own real internal constitution. This doctrine involves the position that a negative prehension expresses a bond. A positive prehension is the definite inclusion of that item into positive contribution to the subjects own real internal constitution. This positive inclusion is called its ‘feeling’ of that item ”(p.41).

into themselves, or prehend, data from the universe as part of their process of becoming, their existence is dependant upon and partly determined by their external reality.

Each actual occasion also has the potential to affect subsequent actual occasions. Even though actual occasions are not enduring-- they come into being and perish -- in perishing they become data for other emerging occasions. In becoming data for other emerging occasions, actual occasions can perpetuate their aims into the future. Inasmuch as all actual occasions prehend data from the universe in the process of their becoming, and inasmuch as those data include all past occasions of experience, emerging actual occasions are dependent upon and partly determined by other occasions that have existed.

It was mentioned earlier that Whitehead referred to clusters of actual occasions as societies. A more accurate presentation of Whitehead's thought is that societies are clusters of actual occasions that share a *common element of form*. Additionally, in a society, the common element of form must arise in each actual occasion as a result of conditions imposed on it by itsprehensions of some other members in the cluster. Those prehensions of the other members, furthermore, are what impose the condition of the reproduction of the common form.¹⁷ In other words, in the process of becoming, each actual occasion in a society prehends, or takes into itself, data from its environment. These data include other actual occasions in the arising occasion's immediate environment. Actual occasions may come to share a common form, then pass on to other arising actual occasions the desire to reproduce that same common element of form. Arising actual occasions take into themselves the desire to reproduce the common element of form and

¹⁷Ibid., 34.

make it a part of their own constitution. In making it a part of themselves, the actual occasions reproduce not only the common element of form itself, but also the desire for the continued reproduction of that element by subsequent actual occasions. Whenever this occurs, a society is formed. Societies, moreover, are dependent upon their constituent actual occasions for their continued existence.

As holons, societies are ranked higher than actual occasions on the continuum of existence, because societies transcend and include actual occasions. The fact that some holons transcend and include other holons points to another aspect of the dependency that exists in creation. The nature of reality is such that entities are intrinsically dependent on their predecessors for their existence: as we have seen, an actual occasion can exist without a society, but a society cannot exist without actual occasions. Similarly, as we move along the continuum between actual occasions and human beings, we find that the existence of some societies is a prerequisite for the existence of other more complex societies. For example, the existence of a water molecule (one holon, or society) is dependent on the existence of hydrogen and oxygen (both hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms are holons, and both are societies). Water contains hydrogen and oxygen and as such, water transcends and includes hydrogen and oxygen. If there were no such thing as water, both hydrogen and oxygen could continue to exist, but without either hydrogen or oxygen, there could be no water.

There are numerous levels along the continuum of existence between actual occasions and human beings. A simplified list would include levels we have already mentioned: actual occasions, atoms, molecules, cells, organs, human beings. The principle of

dependency that operates between actual occasions and societies is active between all levels on the continuum of existence. Again, just as water is dependent upon hydrogen and oxygen for its existence, human beings are dependent upon water: without water, there would be no human beings, but water can continue to exist without human beings.

The discussion to this point has shown how actual occasions are dependent upon and partially determined by their environment, how societies are dependent upon and partially determined by their constituent actual occasions, and how some societies are dependent upon and partially determined by the existence of other societies. Elements of dependency and determination, moreover, can be seen to exist throughout creation. Of the numerous levels of existence along the continuum between actual occasions and human beings, many are dependent upon and partially determined by the existence of others. This dependency indicates an ordering in evolution, the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Before beginning the final section, however, I will suggest three major implications of the partially dependent aspect of the evolutionary nature of reality for pastoral counsellors who wish to use mindfulness meditation in their counselling practice. First, because whatever we might consider as a whole may also be considered as a part of a larger whole *and* as a whole that relies on other parts for its own constitution, the personal, social, and cultural histories of our clients, as well as elements in their current environment, will each have a *partially* determining impact on our clients state of well-being. Individuals cannot be separated from their contexts. Conversely, a change in context has the potential to effect a change in the individual.

Second, the interconnected and partially dependent reality in which we find ourselves

suggests that there will be a tendency toward repetition and, therefore, toward the development of habitual patterns. This tendency may be partially responsible for the resistance to healing and growth one may encounter. If our clients are able to establish new habitual patterns, however, the tendency toward repetition may provide one avenue for stabilizing a measure of healing and growth.

Finally, the dependency inherent in creation suggests an ordering to evolution. If that ordering is one in which higher forms transcend and include lower forms, the stability of the higher forms will depend on the establishment and stability of the required lower forms. Furthermore, if the evolution of consciousness includes an ordering in which it is necessary to attain sufficient competency at one level, before being able to shift the seat of consciousness to a new and higher level, that will have implications on how pastoral counsellors conceptualize and work toward the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. For example, there may be instances when it is necessary for clients to experience temporarily regression in order to stabilize elements at a lower level and develop a stronger basis for continued psychological and spiritual growth. These implications will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters. For now, I will direct our attention to the final component of the argument for adopting an evolutionary view of reality: the existence of directionality, or ordering of value in creation.

Directionality in Creation

A central element in the evolutionary view of the nature of reality is that of the directionality and ordering of value in creation. Pastoral counselling aims at assisting persons in their quest for psychological and spiritual healing and growth. As already

indicated, the terms healing and growth presuppose some form of ordering, some possible difference between what is and what might be. The comparative nature of the terms suggests not only that change is possible, but that some of the myriad of possibilities for change are preferable, or more valuable, than others. An evolutionary view of the nature of reality is able to provide pastoral counsellors with a basis for conceptualizing the nature of possible change and for discerning the nature of healing and growth.

Support for the existence of an ordering of value in creation is found in both process theology and transpersonal psychology. Whereas I find Wilber's model for the evolution of consciousness to be helpful in illustrating the ordering of specific levels and stages in the evolutionary process, I find process theology to be helpful in explaining *how and why* the evolutionary process occurs. The discussion in this section is limited to an exploration of the directionality and ordering of value in creation. I will explore how and why the evolutionary process occurs in Chapter 5.

Drawing on the work of Arthur Lovejoy,¹⁸ Wilber contends that there has existed a philosophy that there is an ordering to creation that stretches from matter to mind to spirit. He refers to this as the perennial philosophy, because it keeps reappearing across cultures and time. The idea of the existence of ordering in creation he refers to as *the great chain of being*. He argues that the perennial philosophy, including the theory of the great chain of being, has formed the core “not only of the world's great wisdom traditions, from Christianity to Buddhism to Taoism, but also of many great philosophers, scientists and

¹⁸Arthur Lovejoy, Great Chain of Being (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).

psychologists of both East and West, North and South.”¹⁹ The key feature of this philosophy is that

reality is composed of several *different* but *continuous* dimensions. Manifest reality, that is, consists of different grades or levels, reaching from the lowest and most dense and least conscious to the highest and most subtle and most conscious. At one end of this continuum of being or spectrum of consciousness is what we in the West would call “matter” or the insentient and the nonconscious, and at the other end is “spirit” or “godhead” or the “superconscious.”²⁰

Some versions of this philosophy include matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit, others have elaborated dozens of discrete stages within each of these five. What each version agrees on, however, is that there is directionality to evolution, an aim toward which all of creation yearns, and that the direction of evolution is from matter to spirit.

We have seen that within Wilber’s framework, reality is composed of holons: wholes which are also parts of larger wholes, or whole/parts. Furthermore, there are four aspects to each holon: the interior and exterior of both the individual and the social. In this framework, evolution is said to occur *holarchically*. That is, what is whole in one stage becomes a part of a larger whole at the next stage. Wilber argues:

All developmental and evolutionary sequences that we are aware of proceed in large measure by hierarchization, or by orders of increasing holism - molecules to cells to organs to organ systems to organisms to societies of organisms, for example. In cognitive development, we find awareness expanding from simple images, which represent only one thing or event, to symbols or concepts which represent whole groups or classes of things and events, to rules which organize and integrate

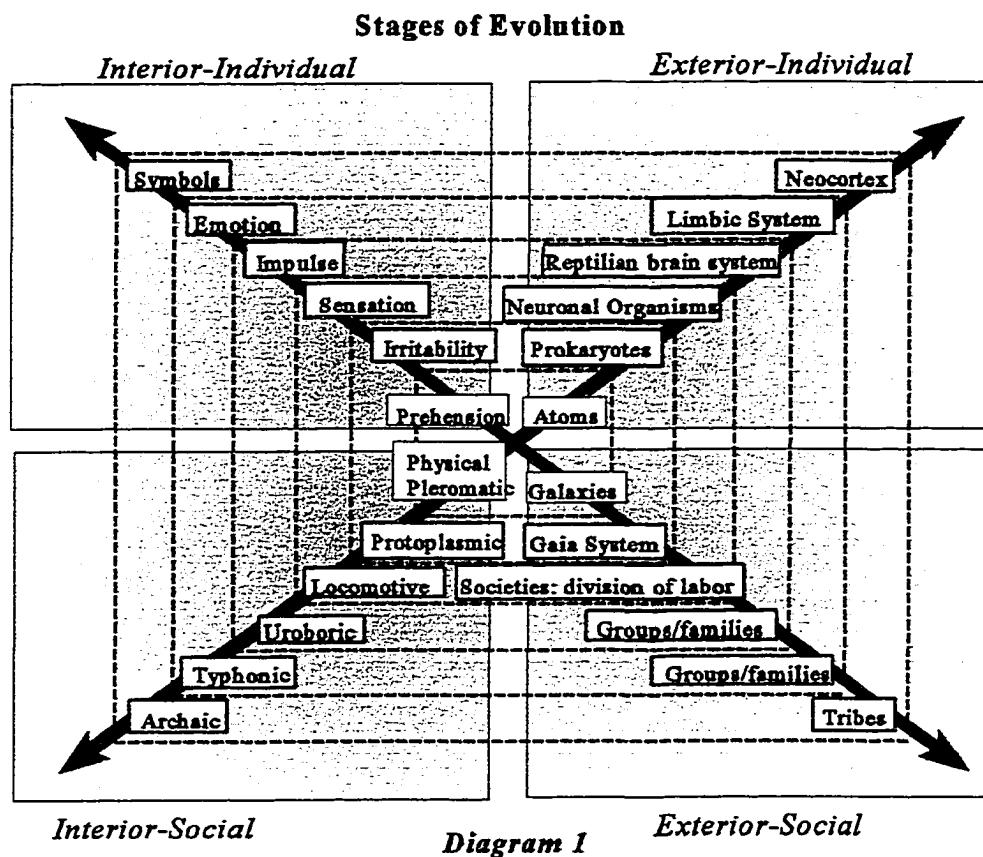
¹⁹Ken Wilber, Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 38-39. Wilber also presents arguments for the existence of a perennial philosophy that includes the notion of a great chain of being in: Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 6-15, 333-49, 528 (n. 28); and The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion (New York: Random House, 1998), 6-13, 60-62.

²⁰Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 39, emphasis in original.

numerous classes and groups to entire networks. In moral development (in both male and female), we find a reasoning that moves from the isolated subject to a group or tribe of related subjects, to an entire network of groups beyond any isolated element. And so on.²¹

Each *step up* in the evolutionary sequence, therefore, represents an increase in depth and in complexity. Wilber illustrates both the dependent nature of reality and the differing levels of complexity and depth in creation in Diagram 1.²²

In this model, the direction of evolution is from the centre out, in all four quadrants. The model indicates that as evolution progresses, each successive level transcends and



²¹Ibid., 41.

²²Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 193. Used by permission.

includes previous levels. In this way, the model reflects the dependency that exists in the evolutionary process. Entities that transcend and include other entities in their own being may be understood as embodying greater depth and complexity than their formative parts.

Wilber contends that, “because evolution *goes beyond* what went before, but because it must *embrace* what went before, then its very nature is to transcend and include, and thus it has an inherent directionality, a secret impulse, toward increasing depth, increasing intrinsic value, increasing consciousness.”²³ The greater the depth of a holon (the more levels a holon is able to embrace and transcend), the greater the level of consciousness in that holon. The movement of evolution, and of growth, can be seen as a movement toward increasing complexity, variety, differentiation/integration, and organization, leading to the realization of increased depth and consciousness.

Given that Wilber's understanding of the evolutionary nature of reality is partially dependent on Whitehead's work, it is not surprising that there is substantial agreement between Wilber and process thought regarding the nature of the ordering of value in creation. Both understand creation to be moving toward the actualization of increasing levels of intrinsic value. It should be noted that this position is not a neo-Darwinian position in which evolution occurs solely by way of gradual step-by-step progressions, however, for both Wilber and Whitehead recognize the existence of discontinuities and evolutionary leaps, as well as evolutionary developments that may promote the actualization of increased intrinsic value and not survivability. Furthermore, both Wilber

²³Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 41, emphasis in original.

and Whitehead argue that evolution has direction, because it is directed.²⁴

This view of the nature of reality in which evolution is understood as moving toward the actualization of increased value, and in which increased value is measured by levels of complexity, differentiation/integration, depth, and consciousness is consistent with common sense and with findings of science. I believe, therefore, that Wilber's model of the evolution of consciousness is an excellent yardstick against which pastoral counsellors can assess the need for healing and the direction of growth.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality by pastoral counsellors. By an evolutionary view, I mean that (1) creation is dynamic and change is inherent to the nature of the universe, (2) that creation is ongoing, and (3) that there is a directionality or ordering of value in the midst of creation. Drawing on the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Ken Wilber, I have advocated the position that all of creation, from the simplest entities to the most complex, is constantly involved in a dynamic evolutionary process and that change, creativity, novelty, and dependency are inherent aspects of the nature of reality. Moreover, I have proposed that this view of the nature of reality is valuable for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients because:

1. It is consistent with both our commonsense experience of the world and with current scientific knowledge.

²⁴I refer the reader to David Ray Griffin, "A Process Philosophy of Religion," TS, Center for Process Studies, Claremont, Calif., 1998, chapter 6; Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 46-78.

2. It shows that there is enormous potential for change within each human being and thereby provides hope that the changes our clients seek may well be possible.

3. It recognizes the inter-related and inter-dependent nature of reality and thereby underscores the importance of context in both shaping our clients' current state of being and in supporting or impeding the realization of healing and growth.

4. It is able to provide a yardstick against which pastoral counsellors can assess the need for healing and the direction of growth.

Finally, we have seen that the evolutionary process is one in which new holons emerge through the introduction of new and creative twists in the evolutionary stream. It has been suggested, furthermore, that there is a secret impulse that draws creation toward increasing depth, intrinsic value and consciousness. The nature of this secret impulse that draws creation onward to realize increasingly higher values will be explored when I examine the relationship of God to creation in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

God's Presence and Action in Creation

If God's power works through presence, and if God's presence is an "omnipresence," then one could say both that there is no center of the universe and that everything in the universe is center to all else. There is no center, for all things are "equidistant" from God, and the centeredness of God is unbounded.¹

To this point, I have argued for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality and have explored the existence of directionality and ordering of value in creation. In so doing, I have advocated Wilber's model of the evolution of consciousness as being helpful in illustrating the ordering of specific stages and levels involved in the evolutionary process. I have suggested, furthermore, that Wilber's model is a yardstick against which pastoral counsellors can assess the need for healing and the direction of growth.

The exploration of change as an inherent aspect of creation showed that the basic units of existence, actual occasions, are best conceived not so much as things that *have* energy, but rather as processes that *are* energy: as transient, vital, drops of experience. These drops of experience, moreover, come into existence through a process by which they prehend the data available to them and choose which of the various possibilities present they will actualize. What has not yet been discussed is why actual occasions may come to choose to actualize new and creative possibilities? How is it that evolution exhibits an upward trend toward the realization of greater depth, complexity, consciousness, and hence, value? In short, what is the nature of this secret impulse that draws creation onward? This chapter will focus on exploring these questions.

¹Marjorie Suchocki, In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), 5.

At the close of the previous chapter, I alluded to the fact that process theology credits God with being the source of this secret impulse. The mere mention of God has the power to evoke a wide variety of conceptualizations and understandings: to some God is a mighty Father who is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing; for others, the term God is so laden with associations of patriarchal repression that they deny the existence of such a being and prefer to think simply in terms of some sort of *higher power*; for some, God is a judge; and for others still, God is a personal friend and saviour. This list is by no means complete. The existence of such a wide variety of understandings and conceptualizations makes it difficult to speak of God without imposing various caveats and qualifications. Despite these difficulties, I do not believe it is possible to speak adequately of the nature of reality, or the possibility for change and growth, without addressing the nature of God.

I have argued that one's understanding of the nature of reality has a direct bearing on one's understanding of the possibility and nature of change. I have also argued that there is an upward trend in the evolutionary process, that there exists a directionality and an ordering of value in creation. I stand with Whitehead and Wilber in asserting that any adequate understanding of why and how this is so must include reference to God. My purpose here, however, is not to argue for the existence of God, nor is it to justify faith statements arising from particular creeds or doctrines. My purpose in this chapter is to explore how we might understand the nature of God's presence and action in creation, in a manner consistent with the understanding of the nature of reality presented thus far.

It is my hope that the readers will find this discussion to be coherent and compelling, and will be able to bring this understanding of God to bear on their own personal beliefs.

In some cases, what is presented here may challenge previously held beliefs. For example, the discussion of God's power as persuasive influence may challenge previously held beliefs about God as an all-controlling influence in the world. I believe, however, that the contents of these discussions are consistent with Christian faith, with what we know of the world through the sciences, and with shared human experience.

I build on the understanding of God discussed in this chapter in Chapters 9 and 10, when I argue that through the development of increased awareness, it is possible for human beings to grow in their ability to recognize and respond to God's creative action. It is my position that growth in awareness has the potential to enhance psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation aids in increasing awareness, and inasmuch as increased awareness is potentially helpful in supporting healing and growth, mindfulness meditation may be seen as being a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors. I am jumping ahead of myself, however. The task at this point is the exploration of the nature of God's relationship with creation.

In this chapter, I argue that God is intimately related to creation, that God has a will for creation, and that God's will is exercised through persuasive influence and is experienced as a secret impulse luring creation forward to the realization of increasing intrinsic value. This argument will be presented in the following three sections: (1) God's role in the formation of actual occasions, (2) the nature of God's will for creation, and (3) the nature of God's power.

God's Role in the Formation of Actual Occasions

I find process theology to be helpful in providing an explanation of *how* God is related

to the world. In this section, I discuss the phases involved in the formation of an actual occasion, and I examine how God is involved in the process. In these discussions it will be necessary for me to introduce terminology specific to process thought. As new concepts are introduced, I will provide brief explanations of their meaning. (Because it is beyond the limits of this dissertation to provide an in-depth discussion of these concepts, I refer the reader who is interested in more complete discussions to the works of Whitehead and Griffin cited in the bibliography.)

The previous chapter indicated that actual occasions come into existence through the process of prehension. What they prehend is their actual universe, which potentially includes all that has ever been. Their prehensions are not limited to what has been, however; actual occasions also prehend what might possibly be. Intimately present in each moment of becoming are elements of pure possibility. There are two different types of prehensions, therefore: prehensions of actualities, and prehensions of possibilities. In process terms, prehensions of actuality are referred to as *physical prehensions*, prehensions of possibilities are referred to as *mental prehensions*.²

Griffin points out that the distinction between physical and mental prehensions *is not* a distinction between prehensions of physical things like sticks and stones versus prehensions of mental things like thoughts and memories. It is a distinction between actuality and possibility. “If a prehension’s datum is an *actuality*, as distinct from mere possibility, then it is a *physical* prehension, whether that actuality be the brain, a past

²David Ray Griffin, “A Process Philosophy of Religion,” TS, Center for Process Studies, Claremont, Calif., 1998, chap. 2, 42, emphasis in original.

occasion of one's own experience, another mind, or a Cosmic Mind.”³ If a prehension's datum is merely a possibility, or a universal, it is a mental prehension. Mental prehensions are also referred to as *conceptual prehensions*.

The first phase of the process of the formation of actual occasions involves the physical prehension of the entire past universe. “In effect, all the past moments of existence are emotionally received into the deepest levels of the newly forming entity.”⁴ Because God is also part of the universe, in this initial phase each newly forming entity also has prehensions of God. It is through these physical prehensions that God is able to provide each newly emerging actual occasion with its *initial subjective aim*.

The initial subjective aim provides the emerging occasion with an initial means of determining the relevance and value of the various possibilities present for it. There are three points I wish to make regarding the initial subjective aim. First, the Divine action in providing emerging occasions with an initial subjective aim is always formally the same.⁵

Second, although the Divine action in providing the initial subjective aims is always formally the same, the content of the initial subjective aim differs from actual occasion to actual occasion. This variability in content exists because “different initial aims are appropriate for different actual entities. The initial aim for any occasion of experience is toward that ideal possibility that would be best for that occasion, given its location and

³Ibid., chap. 2, 43, emphasis in original.

⁴John Buchanan, Universal Feeling: Whitehead and Psychology, Ph. D. Diss., Emory University, 1994 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 411.

⁵Griffin, “Process Philosophy of Religion,” chap. 3, 28.

complexity.⁶ The initial subjective aim of an actual occasion, therefore, is not a generic desire for the general realization of the best. It is a desire directed toward the realization of *specific* possibilities particular to each emerging entity. The content of the initial subjective aim received from God will be different for each emerging entity.

Third, the initial subjective aim is only the *initial* aim of each actual occasion, not the final subjective aim. The initial subjective aim provides a ranking of value from among the various possibilities open to the emerging actual occasion, but it is not fully determinative of what the emerging entity will choose to actualize. Each actual occasion must determine for itself what its *subjective* aim will be. The subjective aim finally determines what the emerging occasion will become.

In the first stage of the process of the formation of an actual occasion, the newly forming entity receives data from the entire universe, including God. God's desire is for each to actualize the best of possibilities and this desire is received into each emerging actual occasion through its prehension of God. God's desire for each emerging occasion is received as an initial subjective aim. The newly forming occasion, however, must choose the degree of influence this initial aim will have in governing its choice of which possibilities it will actualize and which it will ignore.

In the second phase of the formation of actual occasions, *mental* prehensions are separated out from the *physical* prehensions. The reader will recall that physical prehensions are prehensions of what has actually existed, mental prehensions are prehensions of possibilities. For something to be actual, it must once have been possible.

⁶Ibid., chap. 3, 28.

Once it has come to exist, it holds within itself the possibilities that governed its formation in the first place. This is true of any actuality. Some of the possibilities, moreover, will have the nature of being universals. Griffin offers as examples of universals the colour white and the shape round.⁷ Much like the Platonic forms, these universals exist externally as possibility, but are themselves devoid of actuality. In technical process terminology, these universals are the *eternal objects*.

When actual occasions prehend God in the first phase of formation, they prehend the *consequent nature of God*.⁸ God's consequent nature is the aspect of God that prehends, knows, and feels, each moment of experience in creation. The consequent nature of God is aware of the current context for each emerging actual occasion and, therefore, knows which possibilities are the most relevant for a particular emerging occasion and which possibilities may lead to the experience of greater value.

The consequent nature of God, moreover, includes *God's primordial nature*. God's primordial nature is understood as being eternal, unchanging, and capable of influencing the world. It may be thought of as the aspect of God that is the keeper of possibilities. God's consequent nature is able to weave together God's prehensions of what has been with God's knowledge of what may yet be. The eternal objects, as pure potentialities, exist not only as possibilities that have been realized, to a greater or lesser degree, by previous actual occasions; they also exist and are held in *God's primordial nature*.

⁷Ibid., chap. 2, 42.

⁸Although Whitehead wrote as if the initial aim came from a prehension of God's primordial nature, Cobb and Griffin have argued that, given Whitehead's principles, this other understanding is required.

Some eternal objects contained in the primordial nature of God have greater relevancy to the emerging occasion than others. Furthermore, some will be held up by God as being among the best of the possibilities present for each particular occasion and will thereby become part of the initial subjective aim that each actual occasion receives from God. The second phase of the process of the formation of actual occasions, therefore, involves a process by which "the eternal objects belonging to the physical prehensions of the first phase are 'lifted out' and held for contrast and integration with the relevant physical feelings during the later phases."⁹

In the third phase of the formation process, what was separated in the second stage is brought back together through a process of creative synthesis and unifying contrasts.¹⁰ In this phase, the emerging entity chooses for itself, which of the data it has received will be relevant for it, and which it will ignore. Not only that, but in choosing from among the various possibilities before it, the emerging entity determines how it will unite its mental and physical prehensions to form a new moment of experience, its moment of experience. In higher types of organisms, this creative process of separation and synthesis is repeated over and over, creating "higher levels of contrast and synthesis, leading finally to the completion of that moment of experience as a subjective entity."¹¹

The process of formation culminates with a moment of satisfaction, when the occasion attains its subjective aim. This is followed by the perishing of the actual occasion, yet in

⁹Buchanan, Universal Feeling, 412.

¹⁰Ibid., 412.

¹¹Ibid., 412.

perishing the occasion exerts an influence on subsequent occasions.

Each occasion that attains satisfaction, moreover, is reabsorbed into God's consequent nature: once an occasion has attained existence, God knows it, feels it, and takes it into God's own self as God's prehension of the world. These prehensions form God's experience of the world, and in turn, influence the initial subjective aims that God will provide for subsequent emerging occasions. In this way, God both influences creation by providing the initial subjective aims and the eternal objects, and God is influenced by the world through God's prehensions of all occasions that attain actuality.

The Nature of God's Will for Creation

We have seen that God provides each actual occasion with an initial subjective aim and that this aim is directed toward the realization of the best of the possibilities present for that occasion. The previous chapter suggested that the *best* was to be measured in terms of the potential to realize increased intrinsic value. Intrinsic value, moreover, was understood as being based on levels of complexity, intensity, depth, and consciousness. In process thought, God's overall aim is that each occasion "shall achieve some maximum depth of intensity of feeling."¹² Intensity of feeling is achieved as a result of realizing the maximum number of eternal objects, while also maintaining balance. The aim is at increasing complexity, while minimizing incompatibilities. Incompatibility between eternal objects results in a diffusion, or triviality of feeling. God's desire is for each occasion to attain increased complexity with sufficient narrowness so as to intensify feeling.

¹²Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology corrected ed., eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Shelburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 249.

The more complex an occasion is, the greater the number of eternal objects it can potentially realize and still maintain balance. The possibility for intensity of feeling, furthermore, is greater for societies than it is for individual actual occasions. A society is composed of numerous actual occasions, each sharing a common element of form, yet each also individual. The experience of a society is not limited to the experience of the common element of form, for it is inclusive of all of the elements of the component actual occasions. If the various elements of the component occasions become incompatible, however, the incompatibilities may come to overshadow the common element of form and lead to the dissolution of the society. This dynamic tension, between desire for complexity and the possibility of incompatibility leading to triviality, exists throughout the entire spectrum of existence.

Throughout creation, God's aim is for the achievement of maximum intensity of feeling. In every entity, from the simplest occasion to the most complex society, intensity of feeling is brought about through balancing the realization of the maximum number of eternal objects, while maintaining sufficient narrowness so that incompatibilities do not overwhelm the entity and lead to triviality, or dissolution. When I examine the nature of human beings in Chapter 6, I will argue that God's aim for the realization of maximum intensity of feeling is directly linked to the evolution of human consciousness and that psychological and spiritual healing and growth exist in response to God's aim.

The Nature of God's Power

One way to understand the nature of God's power is to begin by examining how God exerts that power: we may learn about the nature of God's power by looking at how God

acts in the world. The discussions presented so far have shown that as actual occasions emerge, in the initial phase of concrescence, each receives its initial subjective aim from God. That aim “determines the initial gradations of relevance of eternal objects for conceptual feeling; and constitutes the autonomous subject in its primary phase of feelings, with its initial conceptual valuations, and with its initial physical purposes.”¹³ By presenting the eternal objects, which are by definition possibilities, God calls actual occasions to respond creatively to what has been.

God's call, through the initial subjective aim and the eternal objects, is described as being a *lure for feeling*, or a *whetting of the appetite*.¹⁴ It is by way of the initial subjective aims that God acts in the world. In supplying each occasion with an initial subjective aim, God acts in a persuasive and not compulsive manner. The initial subject aim is not capable of being fully determinative of what will be, for each occasion is ultimately left with the choice of how it will respond to what it has received. Whereas an actual occasion has no choice but to prehend, either positively or negatively, items of its actual universe, an actual occasion is free to depart more or less radically from the initial aim provided by God. One aspect of God's power is that it is persuasive in nature.

A second aspect of God's power is that it is responsive. Because God prehends all entities that attain existence, and because new entities are constantly emerging, God's consequent nature is always changing by the inclusion of new occasions of experience.

¹³Whitehead, Process and Reality, 244.

¹⁴David Ray Griffin and Joseph Deegan, How are God and Evolution Related? (Claremont, Calif.: Process and Faith, 1987), 19.

Not only is God capable of absorbing into memory all occasions of experience; God is able to respond creatively to the universe as it evolves and continue to provide relevant initial aims to newly emerging occasions. God's response to the universe is driven by God's desire for increased intensity of feeling. We have seen, furthermore, that intensity of feeling is the result of complexity. God's creativity is exercised through the process by which God receives, through prehension, the moment-to-moment experience of the universe, holds that knowledge in contrast with what is possible, then offers to emergent occasions novel possibilities aimed at maximizing intensity of feeling.

God's provision of possibilities though the initial subjective aims means that God is the ultimate source of the upward trend evident in the universe. Each actual occasion's capacity for self-determination, however, means that God is not wholly responsible for what has come to exist.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that God is intimately present in and through all of creation. Creation cannot exist without God, for it is God who provides the initial urge to be. In the initial phase of formation, each emerging occasionprehends God in the deepest level of its being, and through that prehension, each receives an initial subjective aim from God. In turn, in God's prehension of each actuality in the universe, God receives the universe into the deepest level of God's own being. In this manner, God is literally the one in whom "we live and move and have our being."¹⁵

God's will for creation is for the realization of increased intensity of feeling. Intensity

¹⁵Acts 17: 28.

of feeling results from the attainment of increased complexity. There must be balance in the complexity between maximizing diversity and minimizing incompatibilities, however, for too many incompatibilities result in triviality and not intensity. Societies of actual occasions possess greater depth, while maintaining a degree of narrowness, and thus are able to realize greater intensity of feeling. More complex societies, furthermore, are able to realize greater intensity of feeling than less complex societies. In this manner, increased intrinsic value in the universe is based on levels of complexity, intensity, and depth.

Finally, two vital aspects of the nature of God's power have been discussed: (1) it is persuasive and not coercive, and (2) it is responsive and creative. The first aspect means that although God has a will for the universe as a whole and for each entity contained therein, God is not the sole determinate of the universe. The second aspect means that God is also in process, for in receiving back into God's own constitution occasions that have come to exist in the universe, God is changed.

This exploration of God's presence and action in creation has necessarily been brief. Its intention was to introduce concepts critical to the theoretical framework being developed for understanding how mindfulness meditation may be a valuable tool in pastoral counselling practice. In Chapter 6, I will rely on the understandings developed in this chapter in exploring the nature of prehension and perception in human beings, and in Chapter 7 when I explore the nature of human growth and development.

CHAPTER 6

The Nature of Human Consciousness

The same force that produced humans from amoebas produces adults from infants. That is, a person's growth, from infancy to adulthood, is simply a miniature version of cosmic evolution. Or, we might say psychological growth or development in humans is simply a microcosmic reflection of universal growth on the whole and has the same goal: the unfolding of ever higher-order unities and integrations.¹

In this chapter, I develop a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of human beings, including an introductory exploration of the nature of human consciousness. I do so by building on the understanding of the evolutionary nature of reality developed in the previous chapters. The exploration of the nature of human beings will show that human beings are within the extensive continuum of existence and will provide support for the position that human beings share in the evolutionary nature of reality. Some of the implications of human beings sharing in the evolutionary nature of reality are that: (1) change is not only possible for human beings, it is an inherent aspect of human existence; (2) human existence is partly self-determined and partly determined by others; (3) there is an ordering of value with respect to human growth and evolution; (4) human beings share an intimate relationship with God; (5) they are influenced by God's desire for creation to actualize increased intrinsic value; and (6) they possess some capacity to know and respond creatively to God's will.

I will rely on this understanding of the nature of human beings in my exploration of the nature of human consciousness, and the role perception plays in human growth and

¹Ken Wilber, Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm, 3rd ed. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 83.

development. The foundational understanding of the nature of human consciousness developed in this chapter contributes to the development of my thesis by laying the groundwork for understanding: (1) the nature of human growth and development, the subject of Chapter 7; (2) the nature of pathology and healing, the subject of Chapter 8; (3) how mindfulness meditation has the potential to lead to increased awareness, the subject of Chapter 9; and (4) how the development of increased awareness may facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth, the subject of Chapter 10.

The first part of this chapter relies on process theology to develop the argument that human beings are within the extensive continuum of existence and share in the evolutionary nature of reality. In these discussions I explore the phenomena of life and of unity of experience. In the second part of this chapter, I will begin to examine how we might understand the nature of human consciousness and the role awareness has in influencing human development. In particular, I will examine the nature of perception, experience, and consciousness, and the relationship of each of these to the evolutionary process involved in creation.

The Continuum of Existence

In adopting an evolutionary view of the nature of the reality, I contend that human beings emerge in and through the same processes that effect the emergence of the rest of creation. Furthermore, it is my contention that human beings are *special* in that they are a particularly complex form of existence and, in that complexity, they are potentially capable of actualizing great degrees of value. Humanity, however, is not considered special in the sense of being of a different order, or nature, from the rest of creation.

Both transpersonal psychology and process theology provide ways of understanding the nature of human beings that recognize the distinctiveness of humanity, without contending that human existence is exempt from the principles and processes that govern the rest of creation. Both views also illuminate the processes involved in human growth and development, thereby aiding the development of my thesis by providing pastoral counsellors with insight into the role awareness may play in facilitating that growth.

I find process thought to be helpful in showing *how* human beings are within the continuum of existence. Transpersonal psychology, on the other hand, is helpful in describing the various thresholds involved in the evolution of consciousness. As we shall see in later chapters, it is particularly helpful in describing various competencies that must be achieved before a new threshold may be crossed. The discussions in this chapter, therefore, will rely heavily on process thought. In the next chapter, when I move into discussions on the nature of human growth and development, I will rely more heavily on the work of transpersonal psychology.

I have discussed process philosophy's concepts of actual occasions and societies. Although these generic concepts can fairly adequately describe the nature of simple forms of existence, by themselves they are not able to provide an adequate account of the nature of human beings. For one thing, human beings are living, whereas protons and chemical compounds are not. For another, there is a unifying factor in human existence, which makes human beings more than simply the sum of their composite cells, molecules, or organs. The question that will be explored here is how do all these various societies come to form a thinking, acting, human being? I will explore this question by addressing the

two main concerns suggested above: (1) How does process thought distinguish between living and nonliving entities? (2) How does process thought account for the unity of experience enjoyed by human beings?

A Process View of Living Entities

A description of the processes involved in the formation of actual occasions was presented in Chapter 5. At that time, I argued that in the process of formation, emerging actual occasions receive into the deepest part of their beings prehensions of data from the universe. In the second phase of this process, mental prehensions arise from physical prehensions. A more complete understanding of this process is that this emergence results in the development of two poles in the emerging occasion: a *physical pole*, which involves the prehension of actualities, followed by a *mental pole*, which begins with the prehension of possibilities. The possibilities included in the mental pole, moreover, are accompanied by various degrees of desire for actualization. The technical term for this desire is *appetition*. Appetition is the desire, or thirst, for the realization that accompanies each possibility. In the third and fourth phases, when these two poles are brought together through creative synthesis to form a new unity, the various appetitions influence how the emerging occasion will choose among the possibilities present.

It is possible for an emerging occasion to prehend and actualize novel possibilities, possibilities that have not been actualized in our world before. In process thought, the capacity to actualize novel possibilities determines whether an occasion is a living, or a nonliving, occasion. Cobb and Griffin describe this distinction in the following manner:

All occasions of experience have at least some germ of mentality, for 'mentality' is

simply the capacity for self-determination. . . . But in non-living occasions, the mentality is 'merely an appetition towards, or from, whatever in fact already is.' . . . In other words, it brings nothing new into the world, but simply repeats the past, or lets it decay.

A 'living' actuality is one in which the mental pole introduces a novel element into itself, one which was not derived from the past world.²

Actual occasions that primarily conform to the past are primarily physical. This is because those actual occasions exercise their power of self-determination more in accord with their physical prehensions of past occasions than with their mental prehensions of novel possibilities. The greater the degree of novelty an occasion is capable of actualizing, the more it relies on its mental pole and the conceptual prehensions, the more that occasion is considered living.

Inasmuch as there are living and nonliving occasions of experience, there are also living and nonliving societies. Societies themselves exist within an environment. The wider environment, furthermore, is not stagnant, but is also in process and, therefore, subject to change. There are two possible approaches a society may take to maintain its stability in the midst of a changing environment: (1) it can seek to eliminate diversity in its own composition, thereby dismissing any of the problematic elements, or (2) it can respond to the changing environment by actualizing new possibilities.³ When a society adopts the second route, at least with some of its actual occasions, that society is considered living. In other words, societies may be living, or not, and a society is alive when it contains

²John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 67-68.

³Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology, corrected ed., eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 102.

living occasions. Furthermore, a society is living according to the prevalence in it of living occasions.⁴

This section has described how actual occasions and societies may be nonliving, or living, according to the degree that they introduce novel elements into themselves. In this discussion, I introduced the concepts of the bipolar nature of actual occasions, and appetition. This investigation has shed light on how nonliving entities differ from living entities, and has thereby furthered our exploration of the continuum of existence. This discussion, however, is not yet sufficient to explain the unity of experience enjoyed by human beings. The next section will explore how living societies join together to form higher level organisms, and how these organisms may come to enjoy a unity of experience.

Unity of Experience

The goal of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of human beings. Inasmuch as we consider human beings to be living entities, the preceding discussion shows that process thought understands life to exist as a result of the actualization of novel possibilities by the occasions of experience, and by the societies of occasions which make up a human being. Like all societies, living societies vary in levels of complexity. By definition, all societies are made up of occasions of experience that share a common element of form. In some societies, the common element of form is passed serially from occasion to occasion. Such societies are called *enduring objects*. Protons and electrons are examples of simple enduring objects.

To this point, I have described four different variations of societies: those that are

⁴Ibid., 102.

living and those that are not, those that are enduring objects and those that are not. It stands to reason that enduring objects composed of occasions of experience that regularly actualize novel possibilities would be considered living. An example would be a living cell. Many enduring objects, furthermore, may join together to form a more complex living entity, with spatial as well as temporal order. The nature of their connection with one another, however, will determine whether or not the new living entity possesses a unity of experience over and above the sum of the experiences had by its composite parts. The question is one of what makes a heap into a whole?

A process response would begin by speaking about heaps as *aggregates*. According to Cobb and Griffin, "stars, pencils, books, glasses, roads, and corpses are examples [of aggregates]. These entities have no coordinated originality of response. Accordingly, the objects of the world that are visible to the human eye, except for living animals, are mere aggregates. . . . Their intrinsic value is simply that of the sum of their lowly members."⁵ Each example of aggregates cited above is composed of nonliving entities. The defining characteristic of an aggregate, however, is not whether its composite occasions are living or nonliving. The defining characteristic is that, as a whole, it has no coordinated originality of response. Living occasions may also, therefore, be organized as aggregates. Plants are one example of living aggregates for "there would be no centre of enjoyment in the plant higher than the individual cells."⁶

The centre of enjoyment missing in aggregates, but present in humans and other

⁵Cobb and Griffin, 78.

⁶Ibid., 78.

animals, is referred to by process thinkers as the *dominant occasion of experience*. Some aggregational societies may arise that can “give birth to a dominant member, which can coordinate [the spontaneities of its composite occasions of experience] into a unified effect.”⁷ This dominant member is itself an enduring object, composed of dominant occasions of experience. In a dominant occasion, the data received from the various parts of the aggregational society overshadow the data received from the larger universe and, therefore, are the predominant data from which the occasion creates its own unified experience. In this manner, the dominant occasions pull together the experiences of the various parts of the aggregational society to create in each moment, a unified whole. Such societies are no longer considered to be aggregates, but are called *compound individuals*.

The development of a central nervous system is a prerequisite for an aggregational society to give birth to a high-level dominant occasion of experience and, thereby, become a compound individual. It is primarily via the central nervous system that the various component parts of the entity transmit data to the dominant occasion. The dominant occasion of experience, moreover, does not only receive data; like all other occasions of experience, it also exerts an influence on succeeding occasions. The dominant occasion of experience influences occasions throughout the organism, by transmitting its desires as data back through the central nervous system to the various parts of the organism.

The function of the dominant occasion is, in large part, to enhance the survivability of the organism. In receiving data from the various parts of the organism, it has an

⁷David Ray Griffin, “A Process Philosophy of Religion,” TS, Center for Process Studies, Claremont, Calif., 1998, chap. 3, 46.

experience of the organism as a whole and can influence the organism's responses to the external environment. Like all other occasions of experience, however, it also aims at its own enjoyment. Inasmuch as the enjoyment of the dominant occasion arises out of, and contributes to, the enjoyment of the organism, "the contrast between the aim to achieve enjoyment at the level of unified experience and the aim to achieve the well-being of the animal body is not sharp."⁸

For many organisms, the aims of dominant occasion of experience remain closely, or even solely, attached to the needs of the body. In other organisms, however, the dominant occasion of experience may develop sufficient capability to pursue aims beyond the needs of the body. In some organisms, these transcendent aims will arise for brief periods, only to be superseded by aims directed toward meeting bodily needs. In other situations, the dominant occasion of experience may develop the capacity to maintain these transcendent aims over time. In the later case, the dominant occasion of experience may also develop the ability to use the body to pursue its own purpose. At that point, according to Cobb and Griffin, "we may speak of the animal 'psyche' or 'soul'.⁹ In process thought, the *psyche*, or *soul*, is the dominant occasion of experience that has established some capacity for autonomous enjoyment and the ability to use the body to meet aims directed at its own enjoyment. More specifically, the soul is conceived as an enduring object formed by the inheritance from dominant occasion to dominant occasion.

Within the theoretical framework developed to this point, human beings are understood

⁸Cobb and Griffin, 87.

⁹Ibid., 87.

to be compound individuals composed of an elaborate hierarchy of enduring objects. One of those enduring objects, moreover, is composed of serially ordered dominant occasions of experience, and that enduring object may be considered to be the psyche, or soul. This understanding places humanity within the extensive continuum of existence. Although they are highly complex forms of existence, human beings share in the same processes that govern the rest of creation and, therefore, share in the evolutionary nature of reality.

It has been suggested, furthermore, that the psyche/soul is what is able to provide human beings with a sense of unity of experience. Although I suggested that the dominant occasion of experience primarily receives information from the rest of the organism, via the central nervous system, I have not yet discussed the specific ways the dominant occasion receives and processes these data. Nor have I discussed the nature of consciousness. Prehension, perception, and the development of consciousness, therefore, will be the subjects of the next section of this chapter.

Prehension, Perception, and Consciousness

To understand the process view of human life and the evolution of consciousness, an exploration of the concepts of feeling, prehension, and perception is necessary. As mentioned in the previous chapter, actual occasions come into existence through their prehension of data. Prehension was spoken of in terms of feeling. Emerging entities feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*.

The initial stage of the process of the formation of occasions of experience, the stage when the newly forming entity receives data from the universe, is formally referred to as the *phase of physical feelings*. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is the stage of pure

physical reception. That which is prehended by the emerging occasion, moreover, is felt as belonging to external centres.¹⁰

The second stage of the process is formally referred to as the *phase of pure conceptual feeling*. This is the phase when the conceptual prehensions are separated from the purely physical prehensions. Additionally, in this phase there is an emotional appreciation of, and response to, the prehended content. The conceptual feelings of this second stage are direct visions of possibilities of what may be.

Although the prehensions of eternal objects are never conscious in the stage of pure conceptual feeling, they play an important role in the emergence of consciousness. Past actual occasions *must* be felt, but eternal objects *may, or may not*, be felt. When an eternal object is realized as relevant, it becomes part of the data the emerging occasion draws into itself and synthesizes with the physical prehensions. Conceptual feelings illuminate what might be and potentially offer contrast with physical feelings of what is.

The subjective form of a conceptual feeling is valuation, and “conceptual valuation introduces creative purpose.”¹¹ The actual occasion determines its own ideal of itself, by referring to values present in the eternal objects, and to these values as modified in light of the data provided by the physical prehensions.

When the physical prehensions are united with the conceptual prehensions, during the third stage of formation, potentiality is integrated with actuality. This stage is referred to as the *phase of propositional feeling*. In this phase, potentiality serves to show the

¹⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 212.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

emerging occasion either what it is and might not be, *or* what it is not and might be.

Consciousness is understood as how the occasion feels the contrast between actuality and potentiality.¹² Consciousness arises as a result of felt contrast, and arises only in the later phases of the process of the formation of occasions of experience, if it arises at all.

Although all actual occasions are bipolar, having a physical and a mental pole, the contrasts elicited by the conceptual prehensions of the mental pole may be trivial. If the elicited contrast is trivial, consciousness may not arise at all. In that event, the experience of the actual occasion remains unconscious. Even when consciousness does arise, furthermore, it arises only in the later phases of formation. This results in much of the occasion's experience remaining unconscious.

We have seen that higher level animals, including human beings, are really compound individuals composed of an elaborate hierarchy of enduring objects. Inasmuch as the psyche, or soul, is a personally ordered society of dominant occasions of experience, it is one of those enduring objects. Because consciousness arises only in the later phases of formation, if it arises at all, much of the dominant occasion's functioning is unconscious.

Even though this is so, and even though some dominant occasions may never experience consciousness, the dominant occasion plays a crucial role in the life of higher level animals. In receiving and transmitting information, not only does the dominant occasion of experience help the organism respond appropriately to the environment; it is also able to use the body to fulfill its own aims. Inasmuch as those aims may be more or less in accordance with God's desire for the best for each being, understanding the

¹²Ibid., 243.

processes involved in perception, the role of perception in the formation of aims, and the relationship between consciousness and perception, may help pastoral counsellors in understanding how increased awareness can facilitate the processes of psychological and spiritual growth.

Three Modes of Perception

Although we may think of perception as primarily mediated by the senses, process thought contends that there are three different modes of perception, and that sense perception is not the primary mode of perceiving the universe. According to process thought, the primary mode of perception consists of the initial physical prehensions of each occasion of experience and is called *perception in the mode of causal efficacy*.

Perception in the mode of causal efficacy is the “direct, unconscious perception of past occasions that occurs in all actual entities during their initial phase of concrescence.”¹³ It is receptive in nature and provides actual occasions with information about the past. “In this mode, we perceive other things as *actual* and as exercising *causal efficacy* on us.”¹⁴ Perceptions of this mode, moreover, are laden with feeling-tones. In perceiving other things as actual, our perceptions include feelings of attraction or repulsion toward them. Those feelings are the source of the actual other’s ability causally to affect us.¹⁵

The second mode of perception, *perception in the mode of presentational immediacy*,

¹³John Buchanan, Universal Feeling: Whitehead and Psychology, Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1994 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 204.

¹⁴Griffin, “Process Philosophy of Religion,” chap. 2, 13, emphasis in original.

¹⁵Whitehead, Process and Reality, 120.

belongs to a later phase of the formation of an actual occasion. Perception in this mode involves data derived from the senses. According to Griffin, “the point of this name is that the data of perception in this mode, namely, the *sense-data* [original emphasis], are immediately present to conscious experience and, as such, tell us nothing about anything beyond this present experience.”¹⁶ In perception in the mode of presentational immediacy, the contemporary world is consciously prehended, but as it occurs in the immediate present without reference to the past or future, there is no sense of causal influence. This perception is “a physical feeling. But it is a physical feeling of a complex type to the formation of which conceptual feelings, more primitive physical feelings, and transmission have played their parts amid processes of integration.”¹⁷

The interplay between these two modes results in *perception in the mode of symbolic reference*. Perception in the modes of causal efficacy and of presentational immediacy are primal. Perception in the mode of symbolic reference is highly advanced. In symbolic reference, percepta from the modes of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy are synthesized into one subjective feeling. This synthesis involves interpretation and judgement, and results in the ability to perceive the world as “filled with meaningful objects and entities calling forth emotional responses and appropriate actions.”¹⁸

Symbolic reference, however, does not necessarily provide accurate reflections of reality. It is possible that in the process of synthesizing percepta from the two modes,

¹⁶Griffin, “Process Philosophy of Religion,” chap. 2, 11-12.

¹⁷Whitehead, Process and Reality, 311.

¹⁸Buchanan, Universal Feeling, 206.

feelings may be produced that have little reference to the actual state of reality. In that event, the inaccurate symbolic reference may prove to be detrimental to the animal. For the most part, however, perception in the mode of symbolic reference enhances the animal's ability to negotiate the world.

Symbolism is essential for the higher grades of life. In uniting sensory perceptions with memory, symbolic reference enables the animal to learn, and to respond to its environment in ways that might enhance its ability to survive. In animals, even in higher-order animals including primates, perception in the mode of symbolic reference is mainly limited to the interpretation and response to signals. Cobb refers to this as *receptive awareness*.

In the higher animals, the dominant occasion of experience can engage in interpretation and organization, rather than simply in passive reception and transmission.¹⁹ In human beings, moreover, symbolic reference allows the dominant occasion to develop two significant competencies, beyond those exercised by the dominant occasion in animals. First, for human beings, symbols have gained priority over signals in the ordering of experience through perception in the mode of symbolic reference. Receptive awareness rooted in signals continues to exist, but it is supplemented with *reflective awareness*.

The symbolic ordering of awareness adds to the richness of the unconscious to such an extent that it contributes to the emergence humanity. Symbolic reference, in which "vague and mostly unconscious causal perceptions give meaning to the clear and distinct sensory

¹⁹John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 37.

perceptions of the mode of presentational immediacy,”²⁰ is so significant to the functioning of the human psyche, or dominant occasion of experience, that Buchanan suggests that it has become the usual mode of perception for human beings.

For most animals, the dominant occasion of experience is almost entirely devoted to serving the organism. “In the case of the higher animals, this service requires a considerable activity on its part, both conscious and unconscious. This activity can be effectively performed only as past experience can cumulatively help in the interpretation of present experience.”²¹ Unlike signals, symbols “have their meaning independently of the presence or absence of what is symbolized. They connote ideas, concepts, and one another rather than simply denoting some other entity.”²² According to Cobb, symbols enable the dominant occasion of experience to order and fill with meaning larger portions of what it receives and, in turn, relate this to a context that includes both past and future. Moreover, symbols enable consciousness to preserve its achievements through symbolized memory, and thus, gain a new possibility of cumulative growth.²³

Perception in the mode of symbolic reference allows for the ordering of experience in the dominant occasion. In human beings, furthermore, perception in the mode of symbolic reference enables the dominant occasion of experience to attain sufficient organization so as to allow it to attain a surplus of psychic energy. The accumulation of surplus psychic

²⁰Buchanan, Universal Feeling, 400.

²¹Cobb, Structure of Christian Existence, 37.

²²Ibid., 40.

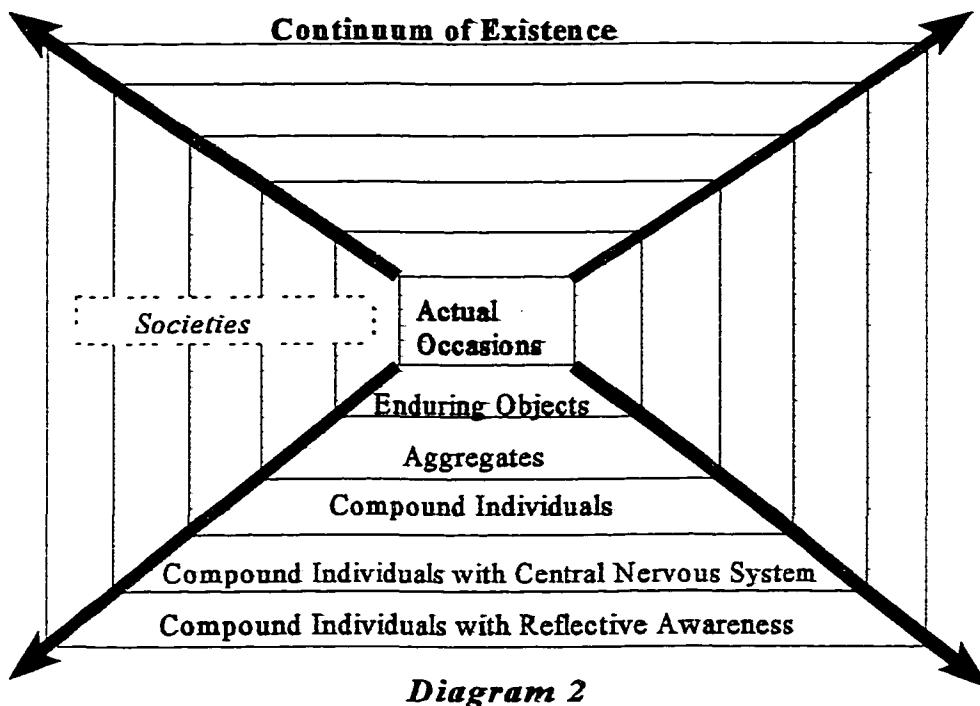
²³Ibid., 41.

energy allows the dominant occasion of experience, the psyche, to pursue its own pleasure, over and above its functioning to meet the needs of the physical organism.

As mentioned, much of the psychic energy of animals and higher order primates is devoted to serving the needs of the body. Reflective awareness rooted in the symbolic ordering of experience enables the psyche to develop surplus psychic energy that it can then use in pursuit of its own aims. According to Cobb, what separates primitive human beings from other higher order primates, is that in primitive human beings reflective consciousness supersedes receptive awareness.²⁴ Receptive awareness continues to function, but it is supplemented with symbolization.

A review of the entities that exist along the continuum of existence show that each step along the continuum produces entities with increasingly greater degrees of complexity, which in turn results in entities with greater potential to realize novel possibilities. Diagram 2, below, illustrates the levels on the continuum of existence discussed to this point. Each level along the continuum transcends and includes the previous levels: enduring objects transcend and include actual occasions; aggregates transcend and include enduring objects; compound individuals, by virtue of the dominant occasion of experience, transcend aggregates, and so on. The threshold between human beings and other high-level primates is the emergence of reflective awareness rooted in the symbolic ordering of experience. Human beings, as compound individuals, however, are clearly within the extensive continuum of existence and share in the evolutionary nature of reality.

²⁴Ibid., 39.

***Diagram 2***

Every entity along the continuum experiences feelings through prehension, and satisfaction in the completion of their own moments of existence. The vast majority of these experiences, however, remain unconscious. If consciousness arises at all, it arises only in the late phases of the formation of a moment of experience. Furthermore, consciousness only arises in those entities capable of symbolic reference, and self-consciousness only arises with reflective awareness and hence is limited to human beings.

The psyche, as the dominant occasion of experience in human beings, receives data from all the various parts of the human body. Some of these data are rooted in the initial prehensions of the occasions of experience. Some are rooted in sense perceptions.

The dominant occasion, like all other actual occasions, also enjoys prehensions of the universe through perception in the mode of causal efficacy. These primary perceptions are not mediated through the body. Counter to claims all knowledge is meditated through the

senses, process thought argues that not only does this non-sensory form of perception exist, but it is the primary mode of perception. Through this mode of perception, the psyche enjoys direct perception of the universe, including God. Perception of God is not the only instance of this sort of prehension. As Griffin points out, “the ‘intuition’ of values, such as truth, beauty, and goodness, also occurs through this non-sensory mode of perception.”²⁵ Perception of our bodies, “when we feel our bodies from the inside,”²⁶ and our knowledge of the past through memory, are also examples of this form of perception.

From all these data, the psyche determines, moment-by-moment, which aims to pursue and it influences the rest of the body to help it meet its chosen goals. God is also present to the psyche in each moment, and by means of the eternal objects God seeks to persuade the psyche to realize the best of possibilities.

Though much of human experience occurs on unconscious levels, it is possible for the psyche to increase its capacity for conscious experience. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, moreover, growth in consciousness moves human beings along an evolutionary continuum, in which each new level embraces greater capacity for the realization of value. The development of awareness is vital to the processes involved in psychological growth, for in developing awareness, the psyche increases its abilities to choose among the possibilities present, and influence subsequent occasions to continue the pursuit of growth.

²⁵David Ray Griffin, Parapsychology, Philosophy and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 137.

²⁶Ibid., 141.

Summary

This chapter has presented several concepts crucial to the understanding the nature of human beings that will be used in the theoretical understanding of how mindfulness meditation can enhance psychological and spiritual healing and growth. In describing the nature of the relationship between actual occasions, enduring objects, aggregates, and compound individuals, I have used process thought to show how human beings exist within the extensive continuum of creation. As part of that continuum, moreover, human beings share with all other entities in all implied by being part of an evolutionary reality.

The discussions on the various modes of perception showed how actual occasions receive and process data, and how they come to choose which possibilities to actualize. In examining aggregates and compound individuals, I showed how the emergence of a dominant occasion of experience allows for a unified sense of experience and, in turn, allows for the realization of increasingly complex possibilities. I presented the position that because the human psyche is capable of reflective awareness, it differs from the dominant occasion of other higher level primates. The symbolic ordering of experience, made possible through reflective awareness, allows the human psyche to develop surplus psychic energy. It can then use this surplus energy to pursue its own aims beyond simply meeting the survival needs of the body.

Finally, I argued that although much of human existence occurs on unconscious levels, it is possible for the psyche to increase its capacity for conscious experience. In developing awareness the psyche increases its ability to choose from among the possibilities present and to influence subsequent occasions to continue the pursuit of

growth. Having presented these basic understandings of the nature of human existence, in the next chapter, I will move to explore the processes by which the human psyche may continue to grow and develop.

CHAPTER 7

Human Growth and Development

God's touch is a directive energy flowing into me at the basic level of my existence, far deeper than my sensory perception, or my central nervous system, or my consciousness. God's energy meets and mingles with the energy of all other relations from my environment and my own embodiedness, so that I necessarily receive God's energy as mediated touch, received through the material energy of all my being.¹

This chapter builds on the understanding of the nature of human beings developed in Chapter 6 as it moves to explore how pastoral counsellors may understand the nature of psychological and spiritual growth and development. The theoretical understandings of levels of consciousness and the processes involved in psychological and spiritual growth explored in this chapter will be used as a basis for understanding the nature of pathology and the processes involved in healing, the subject of Chapter 8. This chapter and the next will complete the development of the theoretical framework for understanding the nature of human beings and with the previous chapters will be used as the theoretical basis for understanding how mindfulness meditation may facilitate the process of psychological and spiritual healing and growth sought in the practice of pastoral counselling.

In this chapter, I discuss the aim and stages of psychological and spiritual growth and development. I find Wilber's theory of levels of consciousness to be a particularly helpful model for understanding psychological and spiritual development. Not only is his model consistent with the understanding of human beings and reality discussed so far, it is able to help pastoral counsellors identify how various schools of psychological thought may be

¹Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), 26.

relevant to individuals at different levels of development. For the purposes of this dissertation, his model is able to provide an understanding of how the development of awareness may help facilitate psychological and spiritual development. Furthermore, his model is able to help pastoral counsellors understand how mindfulness meditation may aid in the development of increased awareness. Whereas process thought has shown *how* God works in creation to encourage the actualization of evolutionary development, Wilber's transpersonal psychology is able to provide a mapping of the stages of psychological and spiritual development in human beings.

The first section of this chapter discusses how Wilber's broad understanding of consciousness parallels Whitehead's understanding of experience and how they are in substantial agreement on the general direction of the evolution of consciousness. This general directionality can serve as a yardstick against which pastoral counsellors may assess the need for healing and the direction of growth and development for their clients.

The second section examines the processes involved in the transformation of consciousness. This discussion explores how developmental thresholds are crossed and how God participates in the processes psychological and spiritual healing and growth. It also provides support for the argument that increased awareness has the potential to facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

The third section outlines the various levels, or stages, in Wilber's integral model of the evolution of consciousness in human beings. I argue that his model of levels of psychological development complements the metaphysical understanding of reality developed in process thought. Together, these schools of thought illuminate how

mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

The fourth and final section examines the one area of major disagreement between Wilber and process thought: the ultimate aim of the evolutionary process. The issue is whether or not there is a step beyond that of deity mysticism. Process theologians argue that deity mysticism is the ultimate aim of human growth and development. Wilber asserts that there is a level beyond deity mysticism: non-dual awareness. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in a thorough discussion of these positions. I assert, furthermore, that resolution of this issue is not essential to the work of this dissertation.

In this final section, I outline both positions and argue that it is possible to allow this disagreement to exist and still rely on both schools of thought in the formulation of the theoretical understanding of psychological and spiritual healing and growth required in support of my thesis. As both schools of thought are in essential agreement up to the understanding of the final stage of psychological development, as their disagreement over the nature of the final stage of psychological and spiritual development only affects how we might think of the final stage of psychological and spiritual growth, and as it is highly unlikely that pastoral counsellors be in a position to provide services to individuals at the upper stages of development, a thorough discussion of this issue is not essential to the purpose of this dissertation. I assume, furthermore, that resolving this disagreement through intellectual debate may not be possible. I find Wilber's argument that only knowledge gained through contemplation may be able ultimately to resolve this issue to be compelling. On that basis, I will leave open the possibility that either position may be correct and leave resolution of this debate to later work.

In the view presented thus far, in the discussions on the relationship of God to creation and on the nature of human beings, I have relied heavily on process thought. As I move to look at psychological and spiritual growth and development, I will be relying primarily on the work of Wilber. Whereas Wilber uses different terminology, and whereas there are some significant differences between the two positions, each section of this chapter will include some discussion on how these two relate to each other, and how I propose they may be used together to form a unified framework in support of my thesis.

Directionality of Psychological and Spiritual Growth and Development

The exploration of process thought has shown that the general aim or direction of evolution is toward the realization of increased intensity of experience and that more complex entities have the potential to realize greater intensity of experience. For Wilber, all holons share the same general aim for growth and development: that of greater depth and expanding consciousness. He states that “because evolution *goes beyond* what went before, but because it must *embrace* what went before, then its very nature is to transcend and include, and thus it has an inherent directionality, a secret impulse, toward increasing depth, increasing intrinsic value, increasing consciousness.”² For Wilber, consciousness is the interior of depth. The two are intimately related: the greater the depth, the greater the consciousness. It is toward increasing levels of consciousness that all of creation is pulled.

When Wilber uses the term consciousness, he refers to the interior of each holon, no matter how large or small. In his model, there are four aspects to each holon: the interior

²Ken Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 41, emphasis in original.

and exterior of the individual and the social. The internal individual reality is the subjective interior: it is the experience of the individual holon. The external individual reality is the objective exterior: it is what is observable and measurable, what is accessible to empirical sciences. The internal social reality is the culture in which the holon exists: it is the shared worldviews, values and meanings. The external social reality is the material components of the holon's society: the empirical nuts and bolts of the collective reality.³

Wilber's use of the term consciousness as the internal individual reality does not necessarily include the understanding of self-consciousness. He would as readily apply the term consciousness to the experiences of prehension, feeling, and satisfaction in an individual actual occasion as he would to the experience of self-conscious reflection in human beings. For him, the disparity between the two is the result of the vast difference in depth between a low-grade actual occasion and a human being, yet both are the internal subjective experience of the entity in question. In this sense, Wilber's use of the term *consciousness* to refer to the subjective experience of the individual holon is comparable to Whitehead's use of the term *experience*. Whereas Wilber's use of consciousness to point to the interior individual on every level of being highlights the commonality between entities (consciousness in human beings is continuous with experience of actual occasions and is different in depth but not different in kind), Whitehead's use of experience emphasizes the subjective nature, without imputing aspects of awareness normally associated with self-reflective consciousness to entities that lack such capabilities.

³Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), 124.

Wilber and Whitehead agree that increased intensity of experience is related to increased complexity and increased depth, and that self-reflective consciousness is dependent upon the development of depth. As I turn to examine human growth and development, I will show that psychological and spiritual growth in human beings spans numerous levels and that each level along the continuum embraces increased depth. That depth, furthermore, is what allows for, and creates, the increased intensity of experience and growth in consciousness.

The *depth* of a holon refers to “the (relative) number of levels of other holons internal to it.”⁴ *Span*, on the other hand, refers to the number of holons on the same level. Diagram 2 in chapter 6 indicated that compound individuals possessing reflective awareness have greater depth than enduring objects, because compound individuals transcend and include in themselves more levels of being. Enduring objects transcend and include actual occasions of experience; compound individuals with reflective awareness transcend and include actual occasions, enduring objects, aggregates, and compound individuals with receptive awareness. The greater the depth, furthermore, the less the span. The number of human beings in the world, for example, will always be less than the number of cells. Inasmuch as entities with greater depth are capable of realizing greater intensity of experience, by actualizing more complex novel possibilities, process thought would concur that the aim of growth and development is toward increasing depth.

The aim of growth and development is toward *transformation* and not merely *translation*. Whereas translation refers to changes within the horizontal dimension,

⁴Ibid., 58.

transformation refers to changes in the vertical dimension-- changes in depth. In translation, an entity may develop various skills and capabilities on the same level of being, in transformation, the entity moves to a new level of being. For example, translation occurs when an animal learns to respond to different types and classes of signals, all within receptive awareness. In transformation, the animal moves beyond signals to develop the ability to order experience symbolically. Although translational development may be a prerequisite for transformational development, the evolutionary aim is ultimately for transformation through increasing depth, thereby creating increased consciousness and intensity of experience. This general aim is the governing principle behind the model of levels of psychological and spiritual development presented in this chapter.

Processes Involved in the Transformation of Consciousness

In this section, I continue to explore how the work of process theologians and Wilber may be used together to form a unified framework in support of my thesis that mindfulness meditation is able to help facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Not only do the two schools of thought share a general agreement about the direction of evolutionary development, they have complementary views on the processes involved in evolutionary development and hence in the transformation of consciousness. This section will explore how this is so.

First, introducing how I will use the term *self* is necessary. In previous discussions, my effort was to show how humanity was within the continuum of existence. From this point on, my focus is narrowed to examine human existence and the nature of psychological and spiritual growth within human beings. Although in very broad terms the internal individual

experience of any entity may be spoken of as the *self* of that entity, the qualities inherent in the internal experience of a lower level entity will be quite different from the qualities inherent to the internal experience of a higher level entity. For example, from a process perspective we saw that entities such as atoms are commonly regarded as purely physical, because they lack a highly developed mental pole. Although the occasions making up an atom do have internal experience, that experience is almost entirely limited to physical prehensions. The self of the societies forming an atom is extremely different from the self of a human being, though in broad terms both selves involve the internal experiences of the entities in question.

In process terms, the dominant occasion of experience is that which pulls together the various experiences of the entire being and allows a compound individual to enjoy a unified sense of experience. The experiences of the dominant occasion of experience in a human being are usually what we refer to when we think of internal experiences forming a self. The dominant occasion of experience, therefore, may also be rightly called the *self*. I will distinguish between the broad and narrow usages by using self to refer to the internal individual experience in broad terms and reserve Self to refer to the internal individual experience of human beings. When I use the term Self, therefore, I am referring to the dominant occasion of experience in a human being.

We have seen that transformation is the crossing of thresholds between levels of existence. Transformation is self-transcendence in which new wholes are produced in all four facets of the holon. This self-transcendence occurs whenever a holon negotiates a developmental threshold through a process of *identification, differentiation* and

integration at a new and higher level. Wilber describes that process as follows:

Every fulcrum [threshold] has a 1-2-3 structure. *One*, the self evolves or develops or steps up to the new level of awareness, and it identifies with that level, it is 'one with' that level. *Two*, it then begins to move beyond that level, or differentiate from it, or dis-identify with it, or transcend it. And *three*, it identifies with the new and higher level and centers itself there. . . . That *integration* or inclusion is the third and final subphase of the particular fulcrum.⁵

This three-step process for transformation is complementary to the way process theologians describe the processes involved in change. To understand the process view of how evolutionary development occurs, it is necessary to return to the understanding of physical prehensions. When I introduced the concept of physical prehensions, I described them as prehensions of actualities, as opposed to mental prehensions, which are of possibilities. In examining at the processes involved in change, a more exact definition of physical prehensions is required. According to Griffin, there are two types of physical prehensions: *pure physical prehensions* and *hybrid physical prehensions*. “In a pure physical prehension, the prior occasion is prehended in terms of its physical pole, which consists of that which that prior occasion had inherited from still earlier occasions. In a hybrid physical prehension, the prior occasion is prehended in terms of its mental pole, which contains any novelty that had appeared in that occasion.”⁶

In process thought, the hybrid physical prehensions are crucial to the process of change. Through hybrid physical prehensions novelty can “get absorbed into the abstract

⁵Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 144, emphasis in original.

⁶David Ray Griffin, “A Process Philosophy of Religion,” TS, Center for Process Studies, Claremont, Calif., 1998, chap. 3, 54.

essence of the enduring individual, so that this essence can be continually enlarged.”⁷ As the novel possibilities become enlarged, the dominant occasion of experience may come to feel an increased attraction toward actualizing those possibilities. For a time, it may feel the attraction toward the novelty without yet making the novel possibility actual. When the attraction becomes strong enough, through repeated inheritance, the dominant occasion may then come to choose to actualize the novelty.

Wilber's description of a three-step process in the transformation of consciousness is complementary to the metaphysical understanding of the dynamics involved in change described by process theologians. In both cases, the initial state is one in which the Self identifies with its current state of being. The Self then recognizes that its current state of being is not the only possible state of being: it comes to recognize the existence of novel possibilities. These novelties may be of possibilities on the same level of consciousness, and therefore, possibilities for translational change, or they may be of possibilities on a different level of consciousness, and therefore, possibilities for a transformational change. In either case, the Self recognizes that there are other possibilities and may feel some attraction toward those possibilities. As the attraction toward the novelty grows, the dominant occasion of experience may choose to actualize those novel possibilities. If the possibilities are of a new level of consciousness, and if Self begins to actualize possibilities on the new level, the Self may come to differentiate itself from its previous level of consciousness. With sufficient realization of novelties on the new higher level, the Self may cross the threshold between levels and seat itself in the new and higher level.

⁷Ibid., chap. 3, 55.

These understandings of the processes involved in change are useful for pastoral counsellors for several reasons. First, inasmuch as change is encouraged through hybrid physical prehensions in which novelty of prior occasions is received into the dominant occasion of experience, and inasmuch as the essence of those prehended novelties can be continually enlarged, even small instances of actualized novelty can help to promote growth and development. Further, this means that small and seemingly insignificant attainments may have a cumulative effect, which in turn may ultimately lead to transformative changes in our clients. Finally, the three-step process of transformation underscores the fact that in crossing a threshold, the seat of consciousness actually shifts its centre of identification so that a new range of possibilities opens up for it, possibilities that were simply not accessible at its previous level. As long as the Self of some clients remains identified with a particular developmental level, they will perceive the world and the possibilities present from that developmental level. Because of that identification, they may be incapable of perceiving different ways of being in the world. The process of disidentification must begin to occur, before the Self can begin to move across a developmental threshold. If awareness developed through the practice of mindfulness meditation can be shown to help the process of disidentification, then mindfulness meditation may be seen to be a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to promote the healing and growth of their clients.

Levels of Consciousness

This section presents an overview of Wilber's understanding of the various levels in the evolution of consciousness in human beings. The theoretical understanding discussed

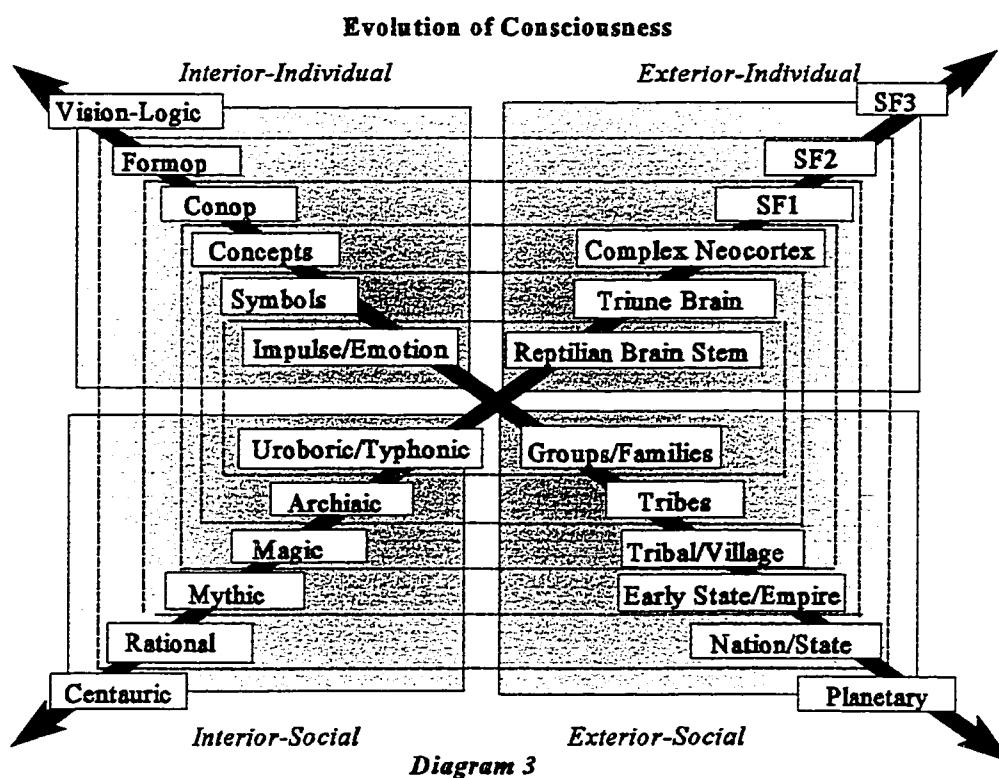
here, along with the discussions on pathology and healing in Chapter 8 will give pastoral counsellors a framework for assessing the need for healing and the direction of growth in their clients. This theoretical understanding of the levels of consciousness, moreover, will be used in Chapters 9 and 10, when I discuss how mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

In this section, I rely heavily on the work of Wilber. The metaphysical understanding of reality developed in process thought complements Wilber's model of the continued evolution of consciousness in human beings. Both process metaphysics and transpersonal psychology contend that the order of development of consciousness in human beings begins with receptive awareness rooted in the body and moves to reflective awareness rooted in the symbolic ordering of experience. Reflective awareness, furthermore, allows for the development of surplus psychic energy that the Self may then use in its continued growth. Whereas process thought provides a metaphysical understanding of how psychological growth is possible, Wilber provides an understanding of the psychological dynamics involved in the evolution of consciousness.

The previous chapter presented the process view of the various levels of being leading up to the emergence of human beings. Process theology and transpersonal psychology agree that there are many identifiable levels in the development of consciousness leading up to the emergence of reflective awareness. Both also agree that consciousness has the potential to develop beyond reflective awareness. Wilber's model provides a conceptual framework for understanding the continued growth and development of consciousness.

It is to Wilber's model of the evolution of consciousness that I first direct our attention.

This discussion includes a general overview of the levels of consciousness, as well as, a discussion of how the three-stage process for transformation relates to the negotiation of transitions from one level of consciousness to the next. Wilber delineates several levels in the evolution of consciousness ranging from impulse to spirit. Although it is beyond the limitations of this work to present a detailed discussion of all of the levels represented in his work, I will briefly describe the six broad levels: sensorimotor (inclusive of impulse/emotion), preoperational (inclusive of symbols and concepts), concrete operational, formal operational, vision-logic, and spirit (the upper levels beyond vision-logic). This model is illustrated in diagram 3.⁸



⁸Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 193. Used with permission.

In this model, all four quadrants are involved in the emergence and existence of each holon. Development in any one of the quadrants is dependent upon, and affects, development in the other three. For example, Cobb suggests that the development of surplus psychic energy, which allows the dominant occasions of experience to pursue their own satisfactions over and above serving the needs of the organism, marks the threshold separating primitive human beings from other higher order primates.⁹ The four-quadrant approach to understanding the evolution of consciousness highlights the view that the potential for developing this surplus psychic energy is dependent on corresponding social, cultural, and physiological developments.

Wilber's four-quadrant model is congruous with Cobb's insight into the importance of the development of surplus psychic energy in the evolution of consciousness and places that insight in the larger context of the parallel biological, social, and cultural developments related to the ability of the mind to formulate and respond to symbols. The biological, social, and cultural parallels to the ability to order experience symbolically are: the development of a triune brain, the advent of tribal identity, and an archaic worldview. In a similar manner, all four quadrants are involved in the ability of consciousness to negotiate any of the six developmental thresholds discussed in this chapter.

Sensorimotor

Several of the broad categorical levels discussed in this chapter contain more than one

⁹John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 35-45.

threshold of development. This is particularly true when looking at the early years of an infant's development. Wilber's first four major levels in the evolution of consciousness in human beings rely heavily on the work of Piaget. Following Piaget, the first of these stages is the sensorimotor level. This first broad stage in Wilber's model of the development of consciousness spans the impulse/emotion level and part of the symbols level illustrated in diagram 3.

During fetal development, by the time of birth, a normal infant will have "developed from protoplasmic irritability to sensation to perception to impulse to proto-emotion, embracing each successive holon in its own compound individuality. But none of these functions is yet clearly *differentiated* (or integrated)."¹⁰ The Self of the newborn infant is not yet differentiated from its material environment. Wilber relies on the work of several theorists, including Freud, Jung, and Piaget, when he asserts that the initial state of the infant is that of *archaic indissociation* in which there is a blurring of boundaries between the subject, object, and self.

The state of archaic indissociation begins to shift sometime between the fifth and the ninth month, as the infant begins to negotiate the first developmental threshold, by differentiating its body from its environment. In so doing, the infant's seat of consciousness shifts from the physiosphere of its social environment to the physical body of the infant. In other words, the sensorimotor period is "predominantly concerned with differentiating the *physical* self from the *physical* environment, and results, toward the end

¹⁰Ibid., 210, emphasis in original.

and her collaborators call this differentiation process *hatching*.¹² In this stage, the infant begins to learn that there is a difference between its physical self and the physical other.

The process governing the negotiation of this fulcrum of development is one of moving from identification, to differentiation, and to transcendence and reintegration at a new and higher level. The infant begins life with a sense of identity with, or indissociation from, the world that surrounds it. It comes to differentiate between its body and the rest of the world. All going well, the infant then “*transcends* [original emphasis] this archaic fusion state and emerges or hatches as a grounded physical self.”¹³ The differentiation at this point is of the physical body only. The emotional self is still not differentiated from other emotional objects.

Preoperational

The preoperational level is sub-divided into two stages: early preoperational lasting from 2-4 years of age, and late preoperational lasting from 4-7 years of age. Around the age of 18 months, the infant enters the phase Mahler refers to as the separation-individuation phase. At this time, the infant begins to learn to differentiate its feelings from the feelings of others. The challenge of this stage is to differentiate the emotional Self from emotional others. According to Wilber, “by around age three, if all has gone relatively well, the young child has a stable and coherent physical self and emotional self; it has differentiated and integrated, transcended and preserved, its own physiosphere and

¹²Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant (New York: BasicBooks, 1975), 53-54.

¹³Ibid., 211.

relatively well, the young child has a stable and coherent physical self and emotional self; it has differentiated and integrated, transcended and preserved, its own physiosphere and biosphere.”¹⁴

Wilber designates the period between 2 and 4 years of age as the level of *magic*. In his understanding, “the first major layer of the noosphere [mind] is magical. During this period, the newly emerging images and symbols do not merely represent objects, they are thought to be concretely *part of the things they represent* [original emphasis].”¹⁵ During the level of magic, the child often fuses wholes and parts in what Freud called primary process, and Piaget referred to as forms of participation. The child attributes power to thoughts, objects, and gestures because of the connections that the child makes between the various thoughts, objects and gestures and other things. Examples would be when a child believes a thought can cause another harm, or that the sun is shining because the child is happy. Images and symbols are not yet clearly differentiated from the things they represent, and similarly mind and world are not yet clearly differentiated, “so their characteristics tend to get fused and confused, ‘magically’.”¹⁶

Wilber calls the late preoperational stage (4 to 7 years) the *magic-mythic* level. During this period, magic proper begins to diminish as the child comes to learn that he or she, cannot magically change the world. In the late preoperational stage, the child comes to believe that even if he or she cannot order the world, “perhaps someone else can, and

¹⁴Ibid., 216.

¹⁵Ibid., 216.

¹⁶Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 173.

so crashing onto the scene come a pantheon of gods and goddesses and demons and fairies and special forces, all of which can miraculously suspend the laws of nature for various, often trite and trivial, reasons.”¹⁷

Concrete Operational

In the first stage, in which the movement was from identity with the physiosphere, the infant differentiates its body from the physical world, then transcends, and integrates on the new level of biocentric identity, in which its emotional self is still identified with emotional others. The concrete operational world is centred not so much on a bodily identity as it is on a *role* identity. In other words, it is *sociocentric*.¹⁸ The third major differentiation is the differentiation of the mind and body. In this process the mind comes to transcend its embeddedness in a merely bodily orientation. The process of identification, differentiation, transcendence, and integration occurs on this level as the child develops the capacity to take the role of others.

In the process of negotiating this developmental threshold, the child “learns his or her *role* in a society of *other roles*, and must now learn to *differentiate* that role from the role of others and then *integrate* that role in the newly emergent worldspace.”¹⁹ Through this differentiation, the locus of self-identity shifts from egocentric to sociocentric.

A second aspect of this stage is the development of the ability to work with mental rules. Wilber has called concrete operational mind rule/role mind. “Rules go one step

¹⁷Ibid., 173.

¹⁸Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 224.

¹⁹Ibid., 224, emphasis in original.

further [than images, symbols and concepts] and *operate upon* concrete classes, and thus these rules . . . begin to grasp the incredibly rich relationships between various wholes and parts.”²⁰ At this stage, the mind is still heavily tied to the concrete world. It can operate on the world, but it cannot yet operate on thought itself.

Formal Operational

In transcending the concrete operational level, consciousness is transformed from a role identity to an ego identity. Building on the work of Piaget and Jürgen Habermas, Wilber argues that it is only at the formal operational level that a truly strong and differentiated self emerges from its embeddedness in bodily impulses, pre-given social roles, and its own internal nature. Formal operational consciousness “is the first structure that can not only think about the world but think about thinking; hence it is the first structure that is clearly self-reflexive and introspective.”²¹

The formal operational adolescent is capable of mentally seeing various possible arrangements of what is given. For example, in the concrete operational stage the child developed the capacity to take different perspectives, in the formal operational stage a relational type of awareness develops, in which all the possible relations things can have with each other need to be held in awareness. This allows the adolescent to begin to understand the realm of mutual interrelatedness. In so doing, the various perspectives the adolescent perceives become relative to each other. Finally, societal roles and rules are

²⁰Ibid., 225, emphasis in original.

²¹Ken Wilber, Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm, 3rd ed. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 270.

no longer sufficient to establish a sense of identity. This leads the individual to question who he or she really is. “Where concrete operational uses rules of thought to transcend and operate on the concrete world, formal operational uses a new interiority to transcend and operate on the rules of thought themselves.”²²

Vision-Logic

In the level of vision-logic, one differentiates from rationality itself. In vision-logic the individual develops the ability to look at rationality and to go beyond rationality. If the rationality of the formal operational stage is global, vision-logic is more global. Vision-logic dwells in a space beyond rationality. Wilber suggests, “if one can be aware of being rational, what is the nature of that awareness, since it is bigger than rationality?”²³

Vision-logic arises with the differentiation from rationality, with the development of the ability to look at and beyond rationality, and it leads to the ability to integrate matter, life and mind in its own compound individuality.²⁴ Wilber speaks of this as *centauric* existence, for in having differentiated from an exclusive identification with body, roles, ego and rationality, consciousness can now integrate them in a new and higher holon.

Spirit

Here we enter what Wilber calls the *transpersonal realm*. The stages of development in the evolution of consciousness can be divided into three large groupings: pre-personal, personal, and transpersonal. The pre-personal realm is also called the pre-rational realm.

²²Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 231.

²³Ibid., 258.

²⁴Ibid., 260.

It includes the levels of development before the birth of the ego in the formal operational level. It is the realm of matter, simple body sensations, and perceptions. The personal realm, otherwise known as the rational realm, includes the formal operational and vision-logic levels. The transpersonal realm, as the title suggests, goes beyond the personal, beyond rationality, beyond ego, toward Spirit.

Wilber divides the transpersonal stage, which I will discuss under this main section heading of Spirit, into four sub-categories: the psychic, subtle, causal, and ultimate. As with the pre-personal and personal levels of existence, the transpersonal levels of existence have their distinct sense of self, cognitions, moral stances and worldviews. In these levels of existence, human beings first enter the realm of the soul and then the realm of Spirit.

In the *Psychic* level, the person no longer identifies exclusively with the individual personality. One's personality is preserved, but one moves beyond it. "The centaur could *integrate* the physiosphere and the biosphere and the noosphere, but the Over-Soul becomes, or is *directly one with*, the physiosphere and biosphere and noosphere."²⁵ In the psychic level, it is not that the individual personality disappears but, as with all the other levels of existence, it is transcended and preserved in a deeper and wider identity. To illustrate the nature of the psychic level, Wilber cites Emerson and nature mysticism. He suggests that at the psychic level, "a person might temporarily dissolve the separate-self sense (the ego or centaur) and find an identity with the entire gross or sensorimotor world."²⁶ On the psychic level, soul and God unite. This occurrence is not to be confused

²⁵Ibid., 284, emphasis in original.

²⁶Ibid., 202.

with the pre-personal state of non-differentiated union with the physiosphere. Wilber calls this confusion the pre-trans fallacy.²⁷

The *Subtle* level is realized as nature mysticism gives way to Deity mysticism. As an example of this level, he looks to Teresa of Avila. The processes involved in this stage of growth are ones in which that “Spirit which is within and beyond the Earth, which is prior to the Earth but not other to the Earth, that Spirit which is source and support and goal of all— that Spirit is intuited at the psychic and comes to the fore in the subtle stage of consciousness evolution, utterly including the previous stages, utterly outshining them.”²⁸

The *Causal* level is one where “the Soul and God are both transcended in the prior identity of Godhead, or pure formless awareness, pure consciousness, as such, the pure Self as pure Spirit . . . no longer the ‘Supreme Union’ of God and Soul, but the ‘Supreme Identity’ of Godhead.”²⁹ Wilber looks to Meister Eckhart for descriptions of this level of consciousness. The following is one example:

²⁷Wilber has written at length on the pre-trans fallacy. I refer the reader to: Eye to Eye, 198-243, and Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 205-08, 230-40. Wilber writes: “The essence of the pre/trans fallacy is itself fairly simple: since both prerational states and transrational states are, in their own ways, nonrational, they appear similar or even identical to the untutored eye. And once pre and trans are confused, then one of two fallacies occurs:

In the first, all higher and transrational states are *reduced* to lower and prerational states. . . . On the other hand, if one is sympathetic with higher or mystical state but one still *confuses* pre and trans, then one will *elevate* all prerational states to some sort of transrational glory. . . . Spirit is indeed nonrational; but it is trans, not pre. It transcends but includes reason; it does not regress and exclude it.” Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 206-07, emphasis in original.

²⁸Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 293.

²⁹Ibid., 301.

In the breakthrough, where I stand free of my own will and of the will of God and of all his works and of God himself, there I am above all creatures and am neither God nor creature. Rather, I am what I was and what I shall remain now and forever. Then I receive an impulse [awareness] which shall bring me above the angels. In this impulse I receive wealth so vast that God cannot be enough for me in all that makes him God, and with all his divine works. For in this breakthrough I discover that I and God are one. There I am what I was, and I grow neither smaller nor bigger, for I am an immovable cause that moves all things.³⁰

The *Non-Dual* moves one step beyond the Causal. This is the level where all dualism collapses, there is no this and that, no subject and object. In Wilber's words, it is the level of I-I. It is the realm where everything is Emptiness. "When all things are nothing but God, there are then no things, and no God, but only *this* [original emphasis]."³¹

This outline of Wilber's levels of development in human consciousness is necessarily brief. Before moving on, however, some discussion is required regarding the manner in which an individual negotiates these various levels. First, as we shall see when we discuss pathology, the evolution of consciousness is not a smooth process: things can and do go awry and pathologies develop. Although God's aim in creation is for the actualization of the best possibilities in each moment, and although evolutionary growth and development of consciousness potentially enable the actualization of greater intensity of experience (which on human terms is seen as the realization of good, truth and beauty), each moment the individual chooses which possibilities to pursue, which to ignore. The choices the individual makes may be more or less in line with the will of God. Culture, society, and biology also influence the possibilities present at any given moment and the choices the

³⁰Meister Eckhart, Breakthrough, trans. M. Fox (New York: Image, 1980), 218, cited in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 302.

³¹Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 309.

individual makes. The interplay of these factors results in the growth of consciousness being a process in which the Self may move ahead in some areas of development and not in others. The Self, furthermore, may become *stuck* in some areas, while continuing to develop in others. In Chapter 8, I will discuss in greater detail how the Self may become stuck and how pathologies develop.

Second, although Wilber argues that the order of development of consciousness is as outlined here, an individual need not have completely attained one level before being able to recognize and even proceed to functioning at the next level of consciousness, at least for part of the time. Similarly, even though this model describes the basic structures that "are ladder like-- which means concentric spheres or nested holarchy --doesn't mean that growth through them is ladder-like. There are all sorts of ups and downs and spirals."³²

This is a crucial point in understanding Wilber's model. He asserts that

the self's center of gravity will tend to organize itself around a predominant higher basic structure. It will tend to *identify* [original emphasis] its center of gravity with this structure; this will be its 'home base' -- its major fulcrum -- around which it will organize most of its perceptions, its moral responses, its motivations, its drives, and so on. Thus, its center of gravity tends to shift through these higher basic structures with an averagely identifiable sequence.³³

The Ultimate Aim of Growth and Development

There is one area of major disagreement between process thought and Wilber's transpersonal psychology: the *ultimate* aim of the evolutionary process. I stress ultimate, because there are many areas of agreement between the two regarding the nature of the

³²Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 201.

³³Ibid., 201.

evolutionary process and the direction of growth and development. Both share similar conceptualizations of the nested nature of reality, of creativity and freedom, and of the aim of evolution being toward increasing actualization of intensity, good, truth, beauty, and love. Both understand God to be intimately related to creation and to be the source of creative and novel possibilities. Both believe that God/Spirit acts persuasively in creation.

From Wilber's perspective, the ultimate aim of the evolutionary process is that of non-dual awareness. When he speaks of this non-dual awareness, he uses poetic language, as in the following:

ever-present awareness announces itself in an unbroken continuity through all changes of state, through all changes of space and time, whereupon space and time lose all meaning whatsoever, exposed for what they are, the shining veils of the radiant Emptiness that you alone now are - and you will swoon into that Beauty, and die into that Truth, and dissolve into that Goodness, and there will be no one left to testify to terror, no one left to deny the Divine, which alone only is, and only ever was, and only alone will ever be.³⁴

Wilber believes that this is the final truth about the nature of reality. He believes that this truth is accessible only through contemplation and is known only by transcending the Deity Mysticism of the causal level of consciousness.

In his work, Wilber does not make a clear distinction between how he uses the terms God and Spirit. In most cases, one could easily substitute one term for the other. In Wilber's usage, Spirit, God, Godhead, and Ultimate Reality appear to be synonymous. He argues, however, that one's perception and understanding of God will differ at each level of consciousness, his position is that the same phenomena appears different and is experienced differently at different levels.

³⁴Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 301.

He does make a distinction between immanent and transcendent spirit. He proposes that “Spirit is *both* the highest *goal* of all development and evolution, and the *ground* of the entire sequence . . . Spirit is the suchness, the isness, the essence of each and everything that exists.”³⁵ When referring to the immanent nature of spirit, he uses *spirit*. When referring to the transcendent nature of spirit, he uses *Spirit*. The highest goal aspect of Spirit is the transcendent nature of Spirit. Yet spirit is also immanent, equally and totally present in all creation.

In its immanent nature, spirit is what lures creation forward. It is intimately present in every holon encouraging evolutionary advance. It is the source of the urge embodied in creation, persuading creation to move towards increasing depth, complexity, differentiation/integration, organization/structuration, relative autonomy, and telos.

In its transcendent nature, Wilber sees Spirit as the goal, or the summit, of evolution. In its transcendent nature, Spirit “far surpasses any ‘worldly’ or creaturely or finite things. The entire earth (or even universe) could be destroyed, and Spirit would remain.”³⁶ Even as spirit is in and through all of creation, creation also yearns to realize Spirit. This is what he calls the transcendent/immanent paradox.

In Wilber’s understanding, creation is an unfolding of spirit going toward Spirit. In his view, human beings have the potential of evolving, or developing, to the level where they can know the ultimate non-dual nature of reality. The evolutionary pull is from matter to body, to mind, to soul, and ultimately to spirit. In his view, in the upper level of the

³⁵Ibid., 44, emphasis in original.

³⁶Ibid., 44.

Spiritual realm “the gap between subject and object collapses, the soul is transcended or dissolved, and pure spiritual or nondual awareness . . . arises. You realize that your intrinsic being is vast and open, empty and clear, and everything arising anywhere is arising within you, as intrinsic spirit, spontaneously.”³⁷

Although Wilber speaks of these two different natures of Spirit, he emphasizes that, ultimately, these two natures are really one. Though he states that when the transcendent Spirit manifests itself, it does so in stages or levels, he is insistent that he is *not* saying that Spirit is hierarchical. In his understanding, Absolute Spirit is not hierarchical. Absolute Spirit is “unqualifiable, without trace of specific and limiting characteristics at all. But it manifests itself in steps, in layers, dimensions, sheaths, levels, or grades . . . and that is holarchy.”³⁸ In his understanding, Spirit/reality is ultimately non-dual and the realization of this ultimate nature of reality is found in the highest level of consciousness.

He relies heavily on Nagarjuna’s style of discourse³⁹ when he suggests that absolute

³⁷Ibid., 47.

³⁸Ibid., 45.

³⁹Nagarjuna was a renowned Buddhist philosopher who worked to articulate the doctrine of Emptiness. Wilber cites T. R. V. Murti’s The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970) as the finest treatment of Nagarjuna in English. Wilber presents Nagarjuna’s understanding of Emptiness in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality 691-715. His summary of Nagarjuna’s dialectic is as follows: “Because, above all, for Nagarjuna, absolute reality (Emptiness) is radically Nondual (*advaya*) - in itself it is neither self nor no-self, neither *atman* nor *anatman*, neither permanent nor momentary flux. His dialectical analysis is designed to show that all such categories, being profoundly dualistic, make sense only in terms of each other and are thus nothing in themselves (the Emptiness of all views and all phenomena). This dialectical analysis applies to all things, all thoughts, all categories: they are all mutually dependent upon each other and thus are nothing in themselves. They therefore have a *relative* or phenomenal reality, but not *absolute* or *unconditioned* reality (which is Emptiness disclosed in nondual *prajna*, which is not a

reality is “neither self nor no-self, neither substance nor flux, neither permanent nor impermanent, nor any other combination of such dualistic notions, but rather is the nondual Emptiness of all phenomena, all views, all stances.”⁴⁰ The form of discourse he uses is: not this, not that, nor both, nor neither. He highlights the difficulty of attempting to use language, which is inherently dualistic, to speak of non-dualism, and of the difficulty in trying to use conceptualization to transcend concept. In using either poetic language, or the “not this, not that, nor both, nor neither” formulation, when speaking about non-dual reality, he seeks to undermine the tendency in rational thought to grasp one side of a dualistic notion and then define Emptiness according to that partial understanding. For example, when seeking to understand what is meant by non-duality, or Emptiness, some may equate Emptiness with formlessness, or nothingness. Though both terms are used with respect to Emptiness, the proponents of nonduality *insist that no side of dualistic formulations is able to provide an adequate description of Emptiness*. To say Emptiness is formlessness as opposed to form is to mistake one side of dualism for nonduality.

From the perspective of process thought, there are several difficulties with Wilber's assertion of the non-dual nature of ultimate reality. To understand these difficulties, exploring the process view of ultimate reality is necessary. Process metaphysics states that there are two ultimates: *ultimate actuality* and *ultimate reality*. Chapter 5 introduced the concept of the dipolar nature of God in which God has both a primordial and a consequent

reality apart from the relative world of Form, but is itself the Emptiness or Suchness of all Forms).” Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 693, emphasis in original.

⁴⁰Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 694.

nature. God's primordial nature was described as the locus of all possibilities. God's consequent nature was described as the aspect of God that knows all that has ever been. This God is spoken of by process theologians as the ultimate actuality, or as Griffin suggests, the personal ultimate.⁴¹

In process thought, God is intimately related to creation. We have seen that process thought asserts that God gives each emerging occasion its initial aim. During formation, the actual occasion prehends this initial aim along with past actual occasions, and from these prehensions, the emerging occasion forms its own subjective aim. This subjective aim governs the subsequent process of concrescence, which culminates in a moment of experience. God, in turn, prehends each occasion of experience and holds each eternally in God's consequent nature. In this process, "the novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one."⁴² If God is viewed as the ultimate actuality, or the personal ultimate, Creativity is viewed as the ultimate reality, or the *impersonal ultimate*.

Creativity is central to a process understanding of the nature of reality. According to Buchanan, "[C]reativity is the process whereby the 'many' become a new 'one' in novel

⁴¹Griffin, "Process Philosophy of Religion," chap. 7, 27.

⁴²Whitehead, Process and Reality, 21.

togetherness, and then are joined by the new 'one.'⁴³ Creativity is the formless universal energy that fuels the process by which the many become one. Whereas the eternal objects, the possibilities contained in the primordial nature of God, may be viewed in the traditional sense as being forms, creativity is "the formless ultimate, the 'ultimate behind all forms.'⁴⁴ Creativity is the activity creation, being the *material cause* of all actualities. Because it is formless, however, it is itself not actual.

Creativity, as the impersonal ultimate, provides the material cause for all occasions of experience. It provides the enlivening energy by which the many become one and are increased by one. God is the everlasting and all-inclusive embodiment of Creativity.

As the ultimate actuality, God is also involved in the process in which the many become one and are increased by one. The primordial nature of God contains the eternal objects, or possibilities, which provide all of the various potential forms embodied in creation. Each moment, God is aware of all that has come into being and is also aware of the possibilities present. God forms an initial aim for each emerging occasion from the various possibilities present in the eternal objects. The possibilities provide the formal cause, but in desiring the actualization of particular possibilities, and in offering that desire to the emerging occasion in the form of an initial aim, God also provides the emerging occasion with its initial final cause. The emerging occasion prehends not only the initial aim received from God, which includes various eternal objects, but also past actual

⁴³John Buchanan, "Whitehead and Wilber: Contrasts in Theory," paper delivered at the Transpersonal and Process Thought Conference, Esalen Institute, Big Sur, Calif., 17-22 March 1996.

⁴⁴Griffin, "Process Philosophy of Religion," chap. 7, 17.

occasions of experience. Both God and the past, therefore, provide efficient causation.

The occasion itself, however, determines its own subjective aim from all of these influences and that aim is the occasion's final causation. In turn, God prehends all occasions of experience. They contribute to God's own being, and are held forever in God's consequent nature. Creativity is the energy that enlivens the entire process.

In the metaphysics outlined by process thought, reality is pluralistic and is composed of Creativity, a bipolar God, and the world. Wilber's view is monistic, however, in that he believes there is ultimately only Spirit. Whereas Wilber believes non-dual awareness to be the ultimate level of consciousness, process theologians argue that non-dual awareness is but one of two *equally* valid and valued forms of awareness. According to process thought, experiences of non-dual awareness are ones in which individuals have conscious awareness of Creativity, experiences of deity mysticism are ones in which individuals have conscious awareness of their relationship with the personal God. In Wilber's model, God is a derivation from ultimate non-dual reality. In the process view, Creativity and God are equally ultimate. They are different, but equal, and one level of consciousness cannot be said to surpass the other. Process thought has difficulty with Wilber's valuing of non-dual awareness over deity mysticism, for within Whitehead's metaphysics it does not make sense to speak of God as being derived from, or subordinate to, Creativity. Whiteheadians argue that Creativity is nonsense apart from God, and that God is nonsense apart from Creativity.⁴⁵ Each presupposes and necessitates the other.

Process theologians also have difficulty with Wilber's position that reality is ultimately

⁴⁵David Griffin, telephone interview, 1 Oct. 1998.

monistic, because in their view his position deprives creation of meaning. The argument is that if Wilber's view is accurate, and creation is ultimately monistic, and Spirit provides the material, formal and final causes, why bother with the entire process? If Spirit provides the energy of creation, and spirit lures creation forward to an omega point where all realize that there is really only Spirit, what is to be gained? They argue that only by holding to a pluralistic view of the nature of reality, in which real novelty emerges and in which all actualities are held forever in God's consequent nature, can one ascribe meaning to the process of creation. Wilber's response to this question of meaning is that the process of creation enables Spirit to know itself. In Wilber's view, the process of evolutionary creation is a vehicle for the Spirit's self-realization.⁴⁶

For the most part, Wilber concurs with the process view of reality. From his perspective, the issue is not that Whitehead was wrong, or even inaccurate, in his understanding of reality. In Wilber's opinion Whitehead's metaphysics is accurate as far as it goes, but in his view it does not go far enough. In arguing for non-duality, Wilber contends that the primary dualisms are those of space and time. Within the perspective of space and time, he would concur that Whitehead's metaphysics is accurate. In his view, however, non-duality transcends those primary dualisms. If non-duality is the ultimate reality, then there is no separation or distinction to be made between Creativity, God and creation, there is no here and there, and no now and then.

Whitehead's metaphysics, however, holds the existence of time as, in Griffin's phrase, a hard-core common sense idea. His metaphysics is developed within the framework of the

⁴⁶Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 55.

ultimate reality of time. One implication of this is that one can only ever know what has been in the past, but one can never know the present in the present. An “actual occasion can be prehended only when [it] has reached satisfaction. The only actual occasion that can be prehended by a present occasion, accordingly, are past occasions. A present occasion cannot, in other words, prehend either contemporary or future occasions. Only an occasion's relations to past occasions are internal to it.”⁴⁷ According to process thought, furthermore, if an occasion were able to prehend contemporary occasions, then time would collapse. If present awareness of contemporary occasions were possible, then experiences of time would be illusory, as Wilber contends.

Wilber argues that there are different ways of knowing, that each way of knowing discloses a different type of knowledge, and each relies on different criteria for validation. Rational knowledge is but one type of knowledge, and to rely solely on rational discourse is to rely on a partial knowledge of reality. The three modes of knowing he discusses are: sensory, cognitive, and contemplative. The referents of each are: sensibilia, intelligibilia, and transcendelia. “All three of these modes of knowing can be validated with similar degree of confidence; and thus all three modes are perfectly valid types of knowledge.”⁴⁸ He contends, and Whiteheadians would agree, that neither rationality nor sense perception is capable of fully disclosing knowledge of ultimate reality.

Wilber contends, furthermore, that if one wishes to discover whether ultimate reality is non-dual, one must follow contemplative injunctions. He asserts that the knowledge

⁴⁷ Griffin, “Process Philosophy of Religion,” chap. 3, 36.

⁴⁸ Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 84.

gleaned through contemplation is available and accessible to any and all who are prepared to follow the injunctions. His position is that just as knowledge of the theory of relativity attained through engagement in advanced intellectual disciplines is unfathomable, or nonsense, to someone with grade school math and science, non-duality understood by those who engage in advanced contemplative disciplines is unfathomable, or nonsense, to those who have only rudimentary knowledge and experience with contemplation.

Even though there is considerable agreement between Wilber and process thought, their disagreement on the ultimate nature of reality is not likely to be quickly resolved. Process theologians like Buchanan have attempted to resolve it by showing how Creativity is similar to the Emptiness attributed to non-dualism. For Wilber, however, that solution would be unsatisfactory, because it collapses non-duality and places it on one side of a dualistic equation in support of a pluralistic worldview. Wilber has sought to resolve the conflict by suggesting that within the realm of rational discourse, the process view is entirely adequate. He asks that theologians and philosophers hold open the possibility that there may be knowledge that cannot be communicated through rational discourse, namely that primary dualisms of time and space may be illusory. This solution is untenable to process theologians.

It is my position that for the purpose of this dissertation, this dispute does not have to be resolved. This dissertation supports my position that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to further the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Although it is important to understand the differences between these two positions regarding the nature of ultimate reality, it is my

position that it is valid to leave resolution of this disagreement to other work. Some readers may find the position that there are two different but equal experiences related to ultimate reality more compelling than the position that non-dual awareness supersedes deity mysticism, or vice versa. Both positions, however, are amenable to the contention of this dissertation that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors.

The second reason I believe resolution of this disagreement not to be essential to the purpose of this dissertation is that this dispute relates to only the highest levels of conscious awareness. The examples Wilber cites of persons who have attained the upper levels of consciousness include Theresa of Avila and Meister Eckhart. As it is highly unlikely that pastoral counsellors will have individuals like Theresa of Avila or Meister Eckhart seek out their services to work with issues related to the highest levels of consciousness, I believe that resolving this dispute in this work is not essential to the purpose of this dissertation.

The majority of the individuals who seek the services of pastoral counsellors will be working within the personal levels of consciousness as described by Wilber, though a minority may be working with issues related to the pre-personal, or transpersonal realms. Process theology and transpersonal psychology are able to provide a solid theoretical framework for understanding how mindfulness meditation is able to help facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth for individuals working with the personal and transpersonal levels of consciousness. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, these schools of thought are also able to help explain why mindfulness meditation may not be the most useful tool for individuals working to heal from pathologies associated with the

pre-personal level of consciousness.

If one holds to Wilber's view of the ultimate nature of reality, one would accept process thought as adequate to the task of providing a metaphysical understanding of reality, within the realm of conceptualization. One would also need to accept, however, that the ultimate nature of reality is beyond conceptualization and can only be known by experience, or spoken of by use of paradoxical language. This perspective supports the validity process theology's understanding of God's relationship to creation as long as one is working within the realm of conceptualization.

If one holds to the view of ultimate reality presented in process thought, one will see transpersonal psychology articulated by Wilber as being consistent with process thought with the one exception being his proposal of non-dualism. At best, from this perspective, Wilber's level of non-dual consciousness indicates conscious experience of Creativity.

Given the significant agreement between these two positions, I believe it is valid to rely on both process thought and transpersonal psychology in creating the theoretical framework for this dissertation. Furthermore, as one can stand one either side of this debate and hold an internally consistent understanding of reality, I believe that leaving the question of ultimacy open for further exploration in other work is valid.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined Wilber's theoretical understanding of levels of consciousness and processes involved in psychological and spiritual growth. I have argued that Wilber's model of the evolution of consciousness is consistent with the understanding of the evolutionary nature of reality developed in previous chapters.

Wilber's model, furthermore, can help pastoral counsellors understand how mindfulness meditation aids in the development of awareness, and how awareness has the potential to aid the process of spiritual and psychological healing and growth. I will rely on his understanding of levels of consciousness and the processes involved in the transformation of consciousness, therefore, in Chapters 9 and 10, when I discuss the relationship between mindfulness meditation, awareness, and psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

I assert that there is substantial agreement between process thought and Wilber's transpersonal psychology on the general direction of the evolution of consciousness. This general directionality can serve as a yardstick against which pastoral counsellors may assess the need for healing and the direction of growth of their clients. I have shown how God acts persuasively in creation, luring creation to actualize increasing intensity of experience. The actualization of increasing depth of consciousness contributes to this aim.

I have not yet discussed how it is that pathologies may develop, or how individuals may become stuck in the process of development. Though God aims for the best in each moment, the processes leading to the emergence of a spiritual level of consciousness are complex and fraught with challenges and difficulties. Chapter 8 presents a theoretical basis for understanding the nature of pathology and the processes involved in healing, and provides the final pieces required for the theoretical framework for understanding how mindfulness meditation can help pastoral counsellors in their work to further the healing and growth of their clients. In Chapters 9 and 10, I apply this theoretical framework to the practice of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling, and suggest how this tool may be used to promote the healing and growth of pastoral counselling clients.

CHAPTER 8

Pathology and Healing

Well, the psyche, for better or worse, *is* going somewhere, and that is why the process can get stuck, why it is fraught with frustration, arrest, fixation, stick points, logjams. If the mind weren't going somewhere, it could never get stuck, never get 'sick'. And these 'sick points,' these 'stick points,' can only be understood in terms of the mind's omega points, of where it wants to go.¹

We have seen that God's aim in creation is for the increasing actualization of good, truth, beauty, and love in the world. God is intimately present throughout all creation and works to realize this aim by encouraging each entity to actualize the best of possibilities. The evolution of consciousness, through the process of identification, differentiation, and reintegration, increases the potential for actualizing God's aim. Growth and development of human consciousness, however, are not linear or certain. Although God's aim may be best served through the attainment of spiritual existence, the processes leading to the emergence of a spiritual level of consciousness are complex and fraught with challenges and difficulties. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the nature of those challenges and difficulties that hinder the evolution of human consciousness.

The major discussions presented in this chapter are: (1) the nature of God's power and creation's freedom; (2) the tension in creation between creative advance and dissolution; (3) an exploration of habitual patterns and the reinforcement of pathology; (4) the nature of pathology and the social and personal contributions to its development; and (5) an exploration of the levels of consciousness and the pathologies that may develop in each.

¹Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995), 535.

God's Power and Creation's Freedom

The nature of God's power and creation's freedom are central issues in understanding the difficulties, or challenges, that impede the evolution of consciousness. If God's aim is for the actualization of increased value evidenced by the evolution of consciousness, and if God's power is a coercive and compelling force, then creation's freedom is an illusion. In that case, it would make no sense to speak of impediments to God's will. In such a deterministic universe, moreover, there would be little justification for pastoral counselling aimed at facilitating the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of clients. Such an understanding, however, is contrary to the model presented in this dissertation.

Both process theology and transpersonal psychology conceive of God's power as persuasive and not compulsive. God's influence on creation is not that of a dictator, but of a co-creator. "God acts directly *upon* every event in the world, and hence indirectly *through* every event. But each of these events is partially determined by its environment, and is partially self-determining."² Fulfilment of God's aim is partially dependent on creation's response. When considering the actualization of God's aim for any entity in creation, there are three sources of influence: God, the environment, and the entity itself. "God is the ultimate power of the universe, but not the sole power."³ God's power, therefore, cannot be understood separately from creation's freedom.

In Chapter 5, we saw that God's presence is experienced through each actual

²David Ray Griffin, "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology," *Encounter* 40 (1979): 13, emphasis in original.

³Ibid., 13.

occasion's prehension of an initial aim provided by God and directed toward the actualization of the best of present possibilities. Each occasion also experiences and is influenced by its environment. Moreover, each has its own subjective aim that governs its process of concrescence. Creation's freedom is centered in the element of self-determinism inherent in each emerging entity. Whitehead argued that "the freedom inherent in the universe is constituted by this element of self-causation."⁴ God encourages creation through the initial aims. Each emerging occasion, however, possesses the power of self-determination and in that power is its freedom. This power of self-determination, moreover, is essential for the existence of creation. Without it, according to Whitehead, there would be no creation. Griffin summarizes this perspective when he states that "an individual is its activity, and its activity is its power. To think of God as . . . completely determining its activities would be to think of God as obliterating its power and hence its actuality."⁵

There is a dual nature to the power possessed by individual occasions. Each actual occasion possesses "the power of determining itself out of influences upon it from previous individuals, and then the power of acting upon subsequent individuals."⁶ In the process of concrescence, each emerging occasion chooses how it will respond to the influences of God and the past, and each decides how it will try to influence future

⁴Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay on Cosmology, corrected ed., eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 88.

⁵David Ray Griffin, "Actuality, Possibility, and Theodicy: A Response to Nelson Pike," Process Studies 12 (1982): 177.

⁶Ibid., 173.

occasions. The self-creative act of determining influences to which to respond, and what that response will be, in and of itself influences subsequent entities. In choosing *this* and not *that*, *this* is actualized and becomes part of the data for prehension by subsequent occasions. The influence one occasion has on subsequent occasions is not only a passive influence in which one entity makes decisions without regard for subsequent occasions. Each occasion also chooses how it will try to influence future occasions of experience. The attempt of societies to impose a common element of form on their member occasions is one example of this type of influence.

The decisions made by each occasion of experience may be more or less in accord with the best of possibilities willed for each by God. These choices may also be more or less in accord with what each has inherited from the past. Neither God, nor the past, ever entirely determines these choices, however. The choices made by an occasion in the process of concrescence are live choices. Cobb argues this point when he states that “[i]f there truly are decisions, then there is a choice among real options - a choice that is decided only as it is made. . . . If to be is to exercise power, as Plato taught, then to be cannot be merely conformation to the past and transmission of its forces to the future. It must entail some addition to the past.”⁷ These choices, moreover, have an impact on the possibilities present for other emerging occasions, by forming part of the context in which other occasions emerge. Just as each occasion is influenced in its formation by other occasions in its environment, each in turn influences subsequent occasions in their process

⁷John B. Cobb, Jr., “Ultimate Reality: A Christian View,” Buddhist Christian Studies 8 (1988): 58.

of concrescence. Partial freedom experienced in the capacity to choose and partial determination experienced as influence by God and the environment are inseparable in creation. God, the environment, and the subject all have a part in forming creation.

The existence of partial determination and partial freedom is true for the simplest entity in existence. It is also true for human beings. Human beings, like all other individual entities in existence, possess a degree of freedom and self-determinism. Cobb argues that “[w]hat seems to be the case is that each moment of human experience largely conforms to the causal impact upon it of one's past experience and of new stimuli, especially from the body; yet it is not merely the vector resultant of these forces. We seem to also make final determinations about ourselves beyond what is settled for us.”⁸

At any moment, a variety of possibilities are presented to each entity, including human beings. There is a spectrum of desirability among the possibilities. This desirability is partially determined by God and the environment, and it is partially self-determined by the subject. The inter-relatedness of freedom and determinism, of God, creation, and each individual is inherent in the nature of reality.

This is consistent with Wilber's understanding of the nature of reality. In his terms, each entity is a whole, and therefore, possesses a degree of agency. Each is also a part, and therefore, is partially determined. Where Wilber leaves us to speculate about the nature of the dynamics involved in freedom and determinism, however, Whitehead and his supporters do not. Process thought provides not only a statement about the existence of freedom and determinism in creation; it can explain the interaction between the two and

⁸Ibid., 58.

show *how* both are essential characteristics in creation.

The process of evolution, in general, and evolution of consciousness, in particular, is rarely, if ever, linear. Instead, although there is a directionality in the overall movement of evolution, the process itself takes many twists and turns, moves forward and back, and at times may seem to stand still. Creation's freedom necessarily means that entities choose to actualize potentialities across the spectrum. Each choice, for better or worse, changes the possibilities available for subsequent occasions and for other entities. "Every event is a cause within subsequent events; that is, every event makes a difference to its successors."⁹

Process thought contends that evil derives from creaturely freedom.¹⁰ Entities can and do choose less than the best of possibilities presented by God. In his discussion on evil, Gordon Jackson describes sin as both "actualized content, i.e., disharmony and triviality, and as downright opposition that so often misses the mark toward which God's constant aiming gently and faithfully lures us."¹¹

The examination of the formation of societies of actual occasions suggested that societies are composed of occasions that share a common element of form. Societies, moreover, are perpetuated by occasions influencing subsequent occasions to desire the actualization of the same common element. This may prove to be a helpful model for

⁹Gordon E. Jackson, Pastoral Care and Process Theology (Landham, Md.: University Press of America, 1981), 150.

¹⁰Charles Hartshorne, "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," in Current Philosophical Issues: Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse, ed. Frederick C. Dommeyer (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1966), 207-08, cited in Jackson, Pastoral Care and Process Theology, 152.

¹¹Jackson, Pastoral Care and Process Theology, 153.

understanding part of the nature of systemic evil. I suggest that systemic evil may be defined in terms of social systems and structures that deny the inherent goodness of creation, the longing for actualization of the best of possibilities, the amazing freedom, and the potential of creativity and novelty inherent in creation. Systemic evil may be identified as the systems and structures that share the common element of encouraging trivial or disharmonious actualization in human existence. In so doing, systemic evil encourages, reinforces, and perpetuates the development of pathology in individuals and the world.

To those who criticize pastoral counselling as being grossly individualistic, I assert that societies and systems are created and supported by human beings and that they only change through the change of individuals. To those who argue that individual therapy has not proven to be effective in improving society or in countering systemic evil, I ask how would one know that society is not better today than it might have been if individual healing had not taken place? That individual counselling, to date, has not been able to dismantle the enormous forces that undermine the goodness of life is not surprising. These forces are many and great.

If I were to attempt to name a great source of systemic evil today, I would suggest that in North America it is the consumeristic society with its materialistic, mechanistic worldview enlivened by spiritual materialism. While in-depth analysis of this assertion is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I offer it here as a heading under which pastoral counsellors may consider the perpetuation of forces that deny the inherent creativity, freedom, interrelatedness, and blessedness of creation. For example, each time an advertisement suggests that one would be a better person as the owner of the product

being sold, this system is perpetuated. Each time people are lured into believing they *are* what they own -- be it property, position, health, or even education -- this systemic evil is insidiously perpetuated. It is not that possessions are bad. Believing that ownership gives one value undermines God's aim for the actualization of the best, by perpetuating denials of the value of life in itself, the nature of reality as process with its inherent characteristics of change and impermanence, and the inherent interrelatedness of all.

Mindfulness meditation offers individuals a vehicle to know who they are, to grow in their awareness of themselves, their world, and their relationship with both. It offers them a method for differentiating from worldviews that undermine the dignity and value of life. Rather than being a practice of tuning out, it is a way of tuning in. In response to the suggestion that meditation is a withdrawal from the world, I point to the Quakers, whose worship is centred on contemplation, and whose commitment to social justice is beyond dispute. I also point to Thomas Merton, Mother Theresa, Pema Chödrön and Thich Nhat Hahn who were led directly from meditation and contemplation to compassionate action. Evil is introduced and perpetuated in the world through creation's freedom. Through increasing awareness, individuals grow in their capacity to know and respond to God's loving action and in this way counter the systemic evil that exists in our world.

Clients enter pastoral counselling because they are experiencing something less than the best. In some form, they are experiencing difficulty in their lives, and they are seeking help. The reality of creation's freedom means the changes sought by pastoral counselling clients may be possible. Creation's freedom means each individual participates in creating the future, for oneself and for the world. Although each exists within an environment and

must relate and respond to their environment, each also possesses a degree of self-determination and, therefore, each possesses some power to participate actively in the processes of healing and growth. This is inherent to the nature of reality and is basically good.¹² In this way, and only in this way, are creativity and the potential for the actualization of increasing levels of beauty, value, and love in the world, and therefore in God, possible.

The goodness of creation does not mean that all choices are in accord with God's desire for the actualization of the best possibilities. It means that the freedom in creation, which allows all entities a degree of self-determination, is the very factor that allows for the possibility of creative advance. The view that each entity makes choices more or less in accord with God's will, and each choice effects what possibilities are present in subsequent moments, also means that the client can be viewed as a co-creator with God. Robert Brizee suggests that caring friend is another helpful way of understanding God.¹³ With God as a caring friend, pastoral counsellors and clients can trust that God is present and working with them for healing and growth.

Tension Between Creative Advance and Dissolution

Pastoral counsellors need to consider the factor of creation's freedom when seeking to understand the nature of the challenges and difficulties that hinder, or impede, the

¹²"Good," Concise Oxford Dictionary, 5th ed. The definition given is "1. Having the right qualities, satisfactory, adequate. 2. Commendable. 3. Right, proper, expedient . . . 8. Adapted to an end, efficient, suitable, competent. 9. Reliable. 10. Valid, sound."

¹³Robert Brizee, Where in the World is God?: God's Presence in Every Moment of Our Lives (Nashville: Upper Room, 1987), 71.

evolution of human consciousness. They also need to consider the tension between creative advance and dissolution that exists in every entity in creation, including human beings. Chapter 4 introduced Wilber's understandings of the four capacities of every holon, those capacities being the capacities for self-adaptation, self-transcendence, self-preservation and self-dissolution.

The capacity for self-preservation is the ability holons have to preserve their individuality, wholeness, or autonomy. The capacity for self-adaption refers to holons' ability to respond to their environment, to enter into communion. It is their *partness*. The capacity for self-transcendence or self-transformation indicates holons' creative ability, their ability to transform themselves in novel ways. The capacity for self-dissolution indicates the principle that "holons that are built up (through vertical self-transformation) can also break down."¹⁴ There is constant tension between these forces.

Wilber refers to the capacity for self-preservation, the wholeness aspect of every holon, as the drive for agency. He refers to the capacity for self-adaptation, the partness aspect of every holon, as the urge for communion. These two forces are *horizontal forces*, in that they exist within each level of evolutionary development. The capacities for self-transcendence and self-dissolution are the *vertical forces*, for they exert tension between levels, drawing a holon either forward or backward through the levels of evolution.

According to Wilber, an imbalance between the capacities for self-preservation and self-adaptation, between agency and communion, is a major cause of pathology in the evolution of human consciousness. The tension between many and one, part and whole,

¹⁴Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 44.

communion and agency is constantly present. More of one side results in less of the other. Wilber argues that too much of either leads to forms of pathology. He states that “*too much agency*, too much individuality, leads to a severing (repression and alienation) of the rich networks of communion that sustain individuality in the first place; and *too much communion* leads to a loss of individual integrity, leads to fusion with other, to indissociation, to a blurring of boundaries and a meltdown and loss of autonomy.”¹⁵

One implication for pastoral counselling of the source of pathology being rooted in an imbalance between the tension between the drives for agency and communion is that pastoral counsellors and their clients need to be mindful of the importance of *both* individuality and communion. The work of self-transformation is dependent on a balance between these two capacities. In North America, the ideal of the autonomous individual is quite powerful, yet the model developed in this dissertation insists that individualism must be held in dynamic balance with communion, or pathologies will develop. Pastoral counselling practice will be enhanced inasmuch as it is able to recognize the clients need to be able to accept and accommodate their partness, including their personal, social, and cultural environments, as they pursue psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

The need for balance between the capacities for agency and communion emphasizes the fact that there is an interdependent relationship between healing and growth of the client and the client's relationships in community. Pastoral counselling cannot turn away from the environment in which the client is situated. Individual health and social health go hand in hand. A primary tenet of most forms of counselling and therapy has been that if

¹⁵Ibid., 46, emphasis in original.

they help individuals to heal and grow, society will also heal. Unfortunately, it has all too often been assumed that individual healing can occur without consideration of the individual's relationship to society. Counselling practices that encourage development of awareness of both agency and communion, and that enhance one's ability to balance these capacities will be beneficial for healing and growth for both the individual and society.

Habitual Patterns

Habitual patterns also have a role to play in the development of pathology. God's will is for human beings to develop to greater levels of complexity. In each moment, God's will is for human beings to actualize the best of the possibilities before them. Each moment choices are made. Choices made in one moment affect the possibilities open in the next. Even though no two moments are ever exactly the same, a choice made in one moment may tend to become self-perpetuating. Griffin suggests that "in a human being, most important in conditioning what causal influence God can have on him at a certain time will be the attitudes and beliefs that have been formed prior to that moment."¹⁶ These attitudes and beliefs are both conscious and unconscious. They are formed by choices the individual has made and are influenced by society, culture, and biology.

Wilber contends that in the developmental process, the self can become *stuck* at various points. He suggests that this stuckness is caused by a failure to differentiate and reintegrate, or by an imbalance between drives for agency and communion. Process theology helps us to understand *how* a momentary decision, or a temporary imbalance, can

¹⁶David Ray Griffin, "Philosophical Theology and the Pastoral Ministry," Encounter 33 (1972): 241.

fail to be righted and progress into the development of pathology. In short, process thought suggests that this is because each decision made by the dominant occasion, or by the actual occasions that make up an enduring object, become data for the prehensions of the next emerging occasion of experience. Once chosen, choosing the same way again is easier. These choices inform our beliefs, which in turn condition what influence God may have on us. In this manner, we develop and entrench habitual patterns of relating to God and the world. Repression and identification are two examples of how habitual patterns in relating to God and the world may result in the development of pathologies.

John Buchanan proposes three stages of psychic repression based on Whitehead's theory of phases of concrescence. For Buchanan, the "first phase of psychic repression finds its basis in negative prehension patterns occurring during the initial phase of concrescence."¹⁷ We have seen that every actual entity prehends either positively or negatively every item in the universe. A negative prehension of an item "excludes that item from positive contribution to the subject's own real internal constitution."¹⁸ Negative prehensions may be used selectively and repeatedly to avoid particular physical feelings, or certain aspects of the past. This is an example of first phase psychic repression.

Second phase psychic repression occurs during the second stage of the process of concrescence. In this second phase, the emerging occasion selects which "components of

¹⁷John Buchanan, Universal Feeling: Whitehead and Psychology, Ph. D. Diss., Emory University, 1994 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 490.

¹⁸Whitehead, Process and Reality, 41.

experience will receive emphasis during the higher stages of psychic processing.”¹⁹ In this stage, repression involves ascribing a negative value to the data provided by particular eternal objects. The eternal objects are always present. Nevertheless, they may consistently ignored, or they may be received and yet ascribed such trivial value as to be insignificant to the entity.

Third phase psychic repression “involves the higher levels of psychic processing occurring in the comparative feelings, which arise during the final two phases of concrescence.”²⁰ The third and fourth stages of concrescence are the stages of creative synthesis and integration. Consciousness arises in the fourth stage, if it arises at all. Repression in this stage includes the more complex ego defence mechanisms such as intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, displacement, and projection.²¹

Repression can occur in any or all of the three stages of concrescence. Each actual occasion in a human being emerges through these stages of concrescence and each becomes datum for subsequent occasions. Numerous actual occasions form the structured societies we know as the cells and organs of our bodies. The cells and organs that make up our bodies, as well as actual occasions that form these societies, all provide data for the dominant occasions of experience, or the self. Repression can occur in any of the stages of concrescence and in any occasion in the human being.

For example, traumatic memories may be blocked by negative prehensions on the part

¹⁹Buchanan, Universal Feeling, 490.

²⁰Ibid., 491.

²¹Ibid., 491.

of the actual occasions forming the affected parts of the body. Those actual occasions may exclude the trauma from contributing to their internal constitution. They may then pass on the exclusion to subsequent occasions within the affected part of the body. In turn, this would increase the likelihood that the actual occasions making up the central nervous system will also negatively prehend the data of the trauma. Similarly, negative prehensions on the part of the occasions forming the central nervous system may increase the likelihood that the dominant occasions of experience will also negatively prehend the trauma. On the other hand, the trauma may be prehended by the actual occasions in the affected part of the body, yet be negatively prehended by the actual occasions making up the central nervous system, or by the dominant occasion of experience. The body may carry the memory, while the mind continues to block it out.

The possibilities for repression abound when second or third stage psychic repressions are also possibilities. Repression can occur in any occasion, at any of the four stages of concrescence, and can be passed on to subsequent occasions, including the dominant occasions of experience. As the dominant occasions emerge through the same stages of concrescence, they are also capable of repression at any stage and can influence repeated repression at any stage of the concrescent process of subsequent dominant occasions.

Finally, Buchanan suggests that a fourth type of repression may exist the process of *transmutation*. Transmutation occurs when a group of occasions are identified by a shared characteristic.²² Sense perception relies on transmutation. Vision is often used as an example. In vision, when we see an object, we do not see a multitude of molecules,

²²Ibid., 492.

rather, we see a solid object or a particular colour, size, and shape. Though helpful to our ability to negotiate through life, transmutation "suppresses conscious awareness of the multiplicity, emotionality, and activity inherent to the universe -- and thus tends to desensitize us to the environment, and to cut us off from feeling and intuition."²³

If repression is a possibility inherent to the process of concrescence, identification may also have its roots in the stages of concrescence. If the data available for prehension includes all of the past, it is possible for an actual occasion to become fixated on an experience, include it as a positive prehension, and grant it excessive valuation and prominence in the occasion's self-determination. It is possible that the over-identification will then be passed on to other occasions, including the dominant occasions of experience. In the case of trauma, the actual occasion may prehend the trauma, ascribe significant value to it, and then allow the trauma to have a significant, or even dominant, contribution in the process of creative synthesis. The distortion in valuation may then be perpetuated through genetic inheritance and continue to exert a disproportionate influence on the dominant occasions of experience, to the detriment of the person's overall life and growth.

Similarly, in the second stage of concrescence, particular values themselves may be accentuated, rather than repressed. These values may then encourage the actual occasion to repeatedly select particular types of prehension as positive. This process could also diminish the potential for actualizing the best of the possibilities presented by God. Each of the choices made by each occasion of experience, even those leading to repression or identification, are expressions of the power of self-determination held by each occasion.

²³Ibid., 492.

Pathology: Biological, Social, Cultural, and Personal Contributions

We have seen that although God has an aim for creation, creation possesses a degree of freedom. Each entity in creation is at least partially free to decide which potentialities it will actualize and how each will actualize those potentialities. Each entity, furthermore, exists within a larger context and is influenced by that context. To survive, each must respond to its context. In exercising its freedom of self-determination, an entity must balance the capacities for self-preservation, adaptation, transcendence, and dissolution. These capacities may become unbalanced in the process of actualization. Extreme imbalances can result in the dissolution of the entity in question. Less extreme imbalances can lead to the entity, society, or person becoming stuck developmentally and repeatedly actualizing less than the best of possibilities held out for it by God. This is the broad understanding of the nature of pathology used in this dissertation.

Chapter 7 argued that the direction of human growth and development is toward spiritual existence. I argued that there are distinct levels in the process of the evolution of consciousness and that although an individual may span several different levels at any given time, an individual's consciousness will be seated in a particular level for most of the time. I also argued that an individual must have attained sufficient grounding in each particular level before being able to shift the seat of consciousness to function at a new and higher level. Pathology is understood to be the result of the self, or aspects of the self, becoming stuck at various points in the evolution of consciousness. These stuck places prevent an individual from continuing to grow. Pathology refers to that which prevents an individual from actualizing God's overall aim for human beings. I will now

explore some biological, social, cultural, and personal causes that have the potential to lead to the development of pathologies in individuals.

Many biological factors may contribute to the development of pathology in human consciousness. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to present a thorough review of all the physiological factors influencing human consciousness. The essential point is that human consciousness is dependent on the body. There must be sufficient development of the central nervous system and of the brain for an individual to be capable of developing intellectually, emotionally, and psychically. For example, physical damage or impairment of the brain can prevent an individual from developing the ability to work with abstract concepts, or to engage in formal operational thought. Similarly, consciousness is at least partially dependent on chemical balances in the body. The evolution of consciousness, therefore, is dependent on adequate physiological support.

The pastoral counselling practice of attending to medical and nutritional concerns of clients and making appropriate referrals to other health care professionals is supported by the recognition of the potential influence biological factors may have on the evolution of consciousness. This recognition also has implications for the use of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling. For example, as chemical imbalances in the brain can affect thought processes, individuals suffering from such imbalances may find it difficult to differentiate from obsessive thoughts while engaging in the practice of mindfulness meditation. Such individuals may also find it particularly difficult to maintain awareness during meditation, and instead enter trance or sleep states. This is not to say that experiences of obsessive thinking, trance, or sleep may be taken as indications of chemical

imbalances in the brain. Rather, inasmuch as chemical imbalances can affect our state of mind, those effects will also be experienced in meditation and for some, the effects of the chemical imbalances may undermine the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation.

Although pastoral counsellors cannot assume that client's experiences of difficulties with meditation are the result of organic disturbances, pastoral counsellors need to attend to the role biological factors play in psychological and spiritual healing and growth, and assess when biological needs must take precedence over psychological and spiritual goals.

Biological factors influencing the evolution of consciousness are not limited to neural physiology. Consciousness enjoys a relationship with the entirety of our physical beings. The well-being of our bodies will affect the well-being of our minds. Experiences of discomfort and pain most vividly show the nature of this relationship. Pastoral counsellors who decide to use mindfulness meditation in their work with clients will discover that it is common for individuals to report experiences of physical discomfort during meditation. This is particularly true for many people when they first start meditating and their bodies adjust to the sitting posture. Experiences of pain make vividly clear one aspect of the relationship between body and mind. When individuals experience physical discomfort or pain, their minds often become so preoccupied with the pain that they have little psychic energy remaining for other pursuits. The physical discomfort individuals experience while meditating may be caused by biological and not psychological factors.

Chapters 9 and 10 will discuss how the practice of mindfulness meditation can help clients grow in their awareness of their bodies and learn to relate to their physical and emotional experiences without being overwhelmed. As a result of these accomplishments

mindfulness meditation can help clients learn to respond to their experiences in caring ways. If a client finds that a particular sitting posture causes pain or discomfort, for example, that pain may be rooted in a physiological problem, or it may be an indication of psychological resistance to the meditative experience. In either event, changing one's posture may be the most appropriate response. If, after ruling out the possibility that physiological injury or stress is the source of the discomfort, continued practice of mindfulness meditation may help clients to grow in their ability to tolerate and work with psychological discomfort manifested in physical sensations.

The social realm, defined by Wilber as the physical resources and environment surrounding an individual, also has a significant role in the evolution of consciousness. On a basic level, resource availability in terms of food affects nourishment, which in turn affects brain development and neurological capabilities. Someone who is perpetually malnourished, for example, may lack the physiological resources to develop through the higher levels of consciousness. On a deeper level, someone who is perpetually malnourished may lack sufficient safety, time, and interpersonal care to enable them to expend conscious energy beyond meeting bodily needs day-by-day. Insufficient resource availability, safety, and care can contribute to development of pathology in terms of individuals becoming stuck in the process of the evolution of consciousness.

One of the bonuses of using mindfulness meditation as a tool to facilitate the healing and growth of pastoral counselling clients is that the only resources it requires are time and a place to sit. There is a slogan used by meditation instructors, however, that says if one can practice even when distracted, one is well trained. For beginning meditators in

particular, environmental distractions may prohibit use of this practice. Even though mindfulness meditation does not require elaborate equipment or resources, it may be difficult for some individuals to find a place to practice that is not filled with distractions, such as other people coming and going, street noises, or interruptions by telephone calls, or television programs. It is not that this practice requires silence or isolation -- it relies on developing awareness of whatever transpires. Time to sit without having to respond to outside demands, however, is a requirement of this practice.

The third area affecting the evolution of human consciousness is that of culture: the interior-social setting that provides meaning and values for individuals. Cultural context affects what an individual may view as possible, or desirable. Griffin argues that one of the great values pastoral ministers offer to society is that in promoting a vision of God, they help to provide "the condition for that most effective of all causes, the slow-working but everlasting, universal, persuasive causality of God."²⁴ The environment partially determines what is possible for individuals. This partial determination also applies in the realm of meaning. For example, in Cobb's analysis of the emergence of the structures of human existence, the societal valuing of reason by the ancient Greeks clearly had a profound influence on the continued aim at rationality, both in ancient Greece and in parts of contemporary Western culture.²⁵ Conceptualizing or valuing other levels of consciousness would have been quite difficult for an individual in ancient Greece.

²⁴Griffin, "Philosophical Theology and the Pastoral Ministry," 244.

²⁵John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

Persons living at levels of consciousness outside the cultural norm face enormous pressure from the larger society to take on that society's identifying characteristics. For those who may have caught glimpses of other levels, survival may have been at stake if they tried to live into them. Isolation from social communion, denials of access to resources, or violent actions aimed at attaining compliance are some of the strategies used by societies to ensure the perpetuation of cultural values and worldviews.

Cultural influences also affect how open clients are to pursuing various approaches to healing and growth. Mindfulness meditation is a simple awareness practice that has historic roots in both Western and Eastern cultures. Pastoral counsellors need to be sensitive to the cultural values that shape our clients worldviews and may affect their openness to engaging in any meditation practice. Some clients with conservative views may fear practices that they associate with New Age movements or with religious traditions other than Christianity. If the pastoral counsellor is convinced that mindfulness meditation may be helpful for those clients, the pastoral counsellor will need to frame its introduction in ways consistent with the worldview of the client. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation focuses simply on moment-to-moment experience and does not employ any objects of devotion, it is amenable to a variety of worldviews.

Levels in the Evolution of Consciousness and Pathology

Chapter 7 argued that human consciousness develops through a series of distinct levels and follows a three-step process of identification, differentiation, and reintegration at a new and higher level. At each level, the self has a different sense of identity, possesses different capabilities, and perceives and relates to its environment in different ways.

Movement between levels involves a paradigm shift, a dramatic shift in worldview. There are many lines of development, furthermore, that span several levels of consciousness.²⁶ Negotiating developmental thresholds involves “a profound change in self-identity, in moral sense, and in self needs, to mention a few.”²⁷ Although an individual may span several different levels at any given time, an individual's consciousness will be seated in a particular level for most of the time. This model asserts that there is a directionality and order to growth on each of the developmental lines and that consciousness evolves as the seat of consciousness moves from one level to the next.

At each stage, the self must negotiate a degree of balance between its capacities for agency, communion, self-transcendence and self-dissolution. The potential for pathology exists at each level and the type of pathology that may arise depends on the level at which the self gets stuck.

Pathologies may develop on any the many different developmental lines. In the broad sense used here, pathology includes failures or inabilitys to differentiate and grow along the lines of morality, interpersonal relationships, spirituality in terms of ultimate concern, creativity, cognition, and so on. Wilber argues that “these various developmental lines often stand in relation of 'necessary but not sufficient'. . . thus, even though these lines are occurring alongside each other, the 'necessary but not sufficient' nature of their

²⁶A list of lines of development spanning levels of consciousness is found in Ken Wilber, The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 246.

²⁷Ken Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 175.

relationship means that ethical development cannot race ahead of interpersonal development, which cannot race ahead of cognitive development, which itself rests on certain physiological maturational schedules.”²⁸ On the other hand, “the ‘necessary’ part *can* [original emphasis] race ahead of the ‘sufficient’ part. For example, a person can be at a very high level of cognition and yet still be at stage 1 moral development.”²⁹ It is possible, therefore, for a person to be familiar with higher levels of existence along various developmental lines, and yet still have their self centred at a lower level. Moreover, part of the self may become stuck at a particular level, while the rest of the self continues on. This part of the self continues to exist on an unconscious level, and though it generally remains unconscious, it continues to influence the growth and development of consciousness negatively.

The first developmental threshold involves the differentiation of the physical self from the physical environment. Psychosis is the potential pathology for one who is unable to negotiate this first differentiation. “Many researchers, from Kernberg to Mahler, have concluded that if due to physiological/genetic factors or repeated trauma, consciousness fails to seat itself in the physical self, the result is *psychosis* [original emphasis] of one sort or another.”³⁰ In psychosis there is a severe reality distortion: thoughts of self and other are so confused that individuals cannot tell where their bodies end and the environment begins.

²⁸Wilber, Eye of Spirit, 246.

²⁹Ibid., 246.

³⁰Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 211.

The second developmental threshold involves differentiation of the emotional self from emotional objects. Failure to negotiate this fulcrum can result in the narcissistic and borderline pathologies. “If the infant does not differentiate-separate its feelings from the feelings of those around it, then it is open to being ‘flooded’ and ‘swept away’ by its emotional environment, on the one hand . . . or it can treat the entire world as a mere extension of its own feelings.”³¹ If the self remains fused and unable to differentiate itself from its emotional world, it thinks that what it is feeling, the world is feeling. This is typical of persons with the narcissistic personality disorders. If the self is able to begin, but not resolve this differentiation, borderline personality disorders ensue. In both pathologies, there is a lack of a cohesive sense of self.

Development of worldview may also become stuck at this level. Mental images and symbols may remain “confused or even identified with the physical events they represent, and consequently mental intentions are believed to ‘magically’ alter the world, as in voodoo, exoteric mantra, the fetish, magical ritual.”³² In ethical development, morality is also close to the body. The individual at this stage exhibits pre-conventional morality. Here the individual “is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right and wrong, but interprets these labels in terms of either the physical or the hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favor), or in terms of the *physical power* [original emphasis] of those who enunciate the rules and labels.”³³ Even if

³¹Ibid., 216.

³²Ibid., 165.

³³Ibid., 165.

they are able to progress along other developmental lines, individuals may become stuck to varying degrees within this level of morality, or within this worldview.

At the third developmental threshold, the self begins to identify with the conceptual mind. For the first time, the child can begin to exert control over its desires and instincts. The emergence of language aids in this. The child can begin to “differentiate its mental will and its bodily impulses, and then begin to *integrate* [original emphasis] its mind and body.”³⁴ This can go too far, however, and result in dissociation and repression. The resulting pathologies are the various neuroses. Wilber describes the various neuroses as ecological crises. He understands neurosis to be “a refusal to include in the compound individual some aspect of organic life, emotional-sexual life, reproductive life, sensuous life, libidinal life, biospheric life. It is a denial of our roots and our foundation . . . [it is] an attempt to render *extinct* [original emphasis] some aspects of our own organic holons.”³⁵

The fourth developmental threshold involves differentiation of role. It is a move from an egocentric perspective to a sociocentric perspective. Pathology at this stage takes the form of *script* pathology, in which one “is *stuck* [original emphasis] in the early roles and scripts given by one's parents, one's society, one's peers.”³⁶ These scripts involve judgements about one's social standing, one's role. A false self gets built up around these scripts, and one's thinking reinforces the particular false self-image. Morality is conventional at this level, and one is mainly concerned with receiving others' approval.

³⁴Ibid., 222.

³⁵Ibid., 222.

³⁶Ibid., 225.

The worldview of this level is still mythological. People who share the same ideologies, myths, worldview, and belief system are accepted. Those who do not are disregarded or rejected.

The fifth threshold involves moving from a sociocentric to a worldcentric capacity. The potential difficulty here is that in differentiating from society's roles and rules, in being able to reflect on and be critical of conventional society, one may discover a self that is not able to fit with society at all and an identity crisis may ensue. At this level, individuals can reflect on thought processes, actions, and feelings, and can take different perspectives. The danger at this level is that rationality may be used to repress emotions. This is the level of post conventional morality with concern for individual rights and principles of conscience. Here mythological religious beliefs give way to rational religious beliefs.

The sixth developmental threshold involves going beyond rationality. It is a move to “differentiate from rationality (look at it, operate upon it) . . . for the first time, *integrate* reason with its predecessors, including life and matter, all as junior holons in its own compound individuality.”³⁷ The self can see its ending, can see ego and personas, and it searches for meaning. The self has differentiated from body, emotional other, society, rules, roles, and rationality. In this differentiation, all those things that propped up its sense of meaning dissolve. Existential malaise or despair, are the particular potential pathologies of this level. “No experience tastes good anymore. Nothing satisfies anymore. Nothing is worth pursuing anymore. Not because one has failed to get these rewards, but precisely because one has achieved them royally, tasted it all, and found it all

³⁷Ibid., 260, emphasis in original.

lacking.”³⁸

Wilber refers to the transpersonal pathologies simply as psychic, subtle, and causal pathologies. As at each of the lower levels, these pathologies result when the self is unable to differentiate and reintegrate at a new and higher level.

Summary

We have seen that God's power exists alongside creation's freedom. Although God's will is for each entity to actualize the best of possibilities, each entity is partially free to determine which it will actualize and how. This freedom results in entities choosing to actualize values across a broad spectrum. As each entity is influenced by and influences its environment, each choice made by an entity has a ripple effect throughout creation and changes the possibilities present in subsequent moments. The impact of the environment and individual freedom can help or hinder psychological and spiritual growth.

Human beings often get stuck in the process of growth and development, and have difficulty continuing to grow along the various developmental lines. I refer to this stuckness as pathology. Habitual patterns may also lead to the development of pathology. Habitual patterns may develop on any level of existence and are formed and sustained by the choices made by each entity. Repression is one example of habitual patterns that may lead to the development of pathology. Over identification is another.

Pathology does not emerge in a vacuum: biological, cultural, and societal factors potentially contribute to the development of pathology at each level of consciousness. Negative influences from any of these can lead to the emergence of pathology.

³⁸Wilber, Brief History of Everything, 195.

This chapter marks the completion of the outline of the theoretical framework that will be used in support of the thesis that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to support the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Chapter 9 will use this theoretical foundation to show how mindfulness meditation is able to promote the development of increased awareness and how increased awareness is able to promote psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Chapter 10 will complete the development of my thesis by showing how pastoral counsellors may effectively implement mindfulness meditation in their counselling practice.

CHAPTER 9

Mindfulness Meditation and Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth

If we commit ourselves to staying right where we are, then our experience becomes very vivid. Things become very clear when there is nowhere to escape.¹

The introduction to mindfulness meditation showed that the practice itself is quite simple. One assumes a sitting position, attends lightly to the out-breath, gently labels any thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arise as *thinking*, then returns attention to the out breath. The name of the practice, *Shamatha Vipashyana* -- mindfulness awareness -- indicates the aim of this practice: the cultivation of awareness. This practice is based on the premises that everyone has experiences and that most people possess some capacity to be aware of their experiences. I contend that the development of awareness is beneficial to psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation can facilitate the development of awareness, it is a useful tool for pastoral counsellors.

This chapter presents a theoretical understanding of *how* the practice of mindfulness meditation may facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth. It builds on the insights into the nature of reality, God's presence and action in creation, human growth and development, and pathology addressed in earlier chapters. I will use general insights from previous chapters to argue more specifically how mindfulness meditation advances healing and growth. This chapter contributes to the development of my thesis by showing how mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate the development of increased awareness

¹Pema Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 2.

and how awareness potentially contributes to psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation is able to do these things it is arguably a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors.

I begin with a discussion of the intention, or *the view*, one brings to this meditation practice and suggest how this view can encourage the development of the openness that is a prerequisite for developing increased awareness. The second preliminary discussion reaffirms the nature of *God's presence* and action in creation. I argue that awareness is a faculty of spirit that aids human beings in their ability to recognize and respond to God. The third preliminary discussion is on *awareness and psychological and spiritual healing and growth*. I contend that because God's presence is known in each occasion of experience, to the extent that one can grow in one's capacity for awareness, one increases the possibility of psychological and spiritual growth. I argue that by limiting the data potentially available to consciousness, mindfulness meditation helps the practitioner to become familiar with two possible responses to potential data: habituation or heightened sensitivity. Although habituation is a common response, experiences of heightened sensitivity to data show the vast richness of data that is potentially available to consciousness at any given time.

The central discussions of this chapter roughly follow the progression outlined in Wilber's model for the evolution of consciousness. The broad subjects of these discussions follow the order of sense perception, emotion, thinking, will and spirit.

There are three main discussions of sense perceptions. First, I examine how *repression as transmutation* may promote the process of differentiation and yet hinder the process of

reintegration. I contend that repression through transmutation is subject to change and that mindfulness meditation enhances the ability of the mind to tolerate the reception of greater amounts of data without being overwhelmed.

The second discussion in this section focuses on the *synchronization of body and mind*. Here I show that experiences of heightened sensitivity to sense perception resulting from mindfulness meditation are not to be mistaken as experiences of pre-differentiated bliss. Rather, these are indications of growth in synchronization of body and mind and, as such, are part of the process of reintegration at a higher level of consciousness.

The third discussion focuses on the role sense perceptions play in *the ability to love*. Here I argue that transmutation involved in sense perception can affect an individual's capacity to love. I suggest that increased ability to receive and respond to pre-rational sense perceptions can enhance one's ability to love.

The section on *emotions* is divided into five separate discussions. First I introduce the relationship between the body and emotions, and discuss the mechanisms of repression of emotion involved in the development of neuroses. I argue that mindfulness meditation provides a container in which the mind can relax these repressive urges, allow emotions to rise to consciousness, and then reintegrate those emotions in the process of growth.

The second discussion on emotions examines *body armouring* and the repression of emotions. I show how mindfulness meditation can help reverse the effects of that armouring. The third examines the role of *culture* in the acceptance or repression of emotion. The fourth examines the relationship between *emotions and God* and argues that inasmuch as human beings are able to increase their awareness of their emotions, they

increase their potential to know and respond creatively to God's will for them. The fifth discussion examines *mindfulness meditation and spiritual growth* in terms of working with emotions. I present an overview of how mindfulness meditation can help individuals grow in their ability to differentiate from their emotions and reintegrate their experiences of emotion on a higher level of consciousness.

The last three discussions in this chapter focus on the helpfulness of mindfulness meditation in working with *scripts*, the development of *will*, and *spiritual development*. The discussion on scripts examines the role of discursive thought in the maintenance of script pathologies. I show how mindfulness meditation can help individuals differentiate from scripts and increase their ability to relate to the roles they may assume from a higher level of consciousness. In the discussion on will, I show how this meditation practice aids the development of will and how will enhances psychological growth. The final discussion argues that as the practice of mindfulness meditation enhances our ability to know who we are, it helps us open to God's creative influence in our lives and thus holds the potential to enhance our spiritual growth.

Intention: The View

The teachers relied upon in this work insist that mindfulness practice is not intended to be used for some sort of personal improvement project. Their teaching on this matter is not intended to suggest that change is not possible or desirable. Rather, it is to underscore the fact that this practice does not aim at cultivating aggression toward oneself. As Pema Chödrön states, "meditation practice isn't about trying to throw ourselves away and

become something better. It's about befriending who we already are.”² The teachers recognize that people may engage in spiritual practices to repress or disown part of who they are. For some, the desire to meditate may include a subtle or not so subtle, form of self-hatred. The teachers seek to underscore the fact that the ground of mindfulness meditation practice is who the individual is, right now.

This teaching may seem antithetical to understanding mindfulness meditation as a useful tool for facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth. In my view, however, it is not. The aim of this teaching is to point to the profound trust in the goodness of creation and to the essential goodness of human beings. The view with which one begins this meditation practice is that of *original blessing* and not *original sin*. Original blessing is a present reality and not simply a fact from history long past. God's presence always blesses us and God's love always surrounds us. Every occasion of experience that forms our being originates with the prehension of God's initial aim, and upon attaining satisfaction, each is held eternally in God's own being. God's presence and action in creation are trustworthy. There is nowhere we can be that God is not also present. God's grace is always the foundation of our lives. No matter who we are, freedom, possibility, creativity, and love are our birthright. They are *bred in our bones*, present in the heart of all moments of experience that make up our selves and our lives. In this sense, whoever we may be, our situation is workable. This does not mean our lives are without challenges, difficulties, pain, or even suffering. It does mean that we can be

²Pema Chödrön, The Wisdom of No-Escape: and The Path of Loving-Kindness (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1991), 4.

gentle with ourselves, trust in God, and open ourselves to what is and to what is possible.

The meditation teachers believe that sitting with oneself *as one is right now* is central to alleviating suffering and developing loving kindness, or compassion.³ Their instruction that mindfulness meditation is not to be undertaken as some sort of self improvement project does not mean that they view meditation as a means of developing the type of acceptance that leads to apathy, or indifference. Rather, they see self-acceptance as an essential element in the foundation for the development of loving-kindness and as a prerequisite for being able to work with gentleness with the stuck places in our beings.

This is not acceptance that might take the form of “Oh well, I am an angry woman-hater who has little self control over my impulses. I can accept that. God is always with me so it does not matter if I go home and beat my wife.” In my understanding, accepting one's experiences during meditation, including experiences of anger, allows one to tolerate those experiences, become familiar with them and, in so doing, gain freedom from being driven by them to act impulsively. Acceptance of experience during meditation can carry over to when one is not formally meditating. Similarly, freedom from being driven by impulse while meditating also carries over and helps to create freedom from impulsive activity away from the cushion. Because God is always present, willing the best of all possibilities, and holding eternally every occasion of experience, what we do matters eternally. Each moment offers new possibilities and each moment offers a fresh start.

In a sense, the meditation teachers have a radical and profound trust in the ability of Spirit to shine forth in every human being. Their trust in original blessing, or in basic

³Pema Chödrön, personal interview, 14 June 1998.

goodness is such that they believe that in the case of the *angry woman hater*, awareness and acceptance of the anger and the hate form the ground from which realization of change is possible. (In fact, as we shall see later in this chapter, being able to tolerate one's anger and hate and being able to literally sit with those feelings, helps to create tremendous freedom of choice with respect to action, when those same feelings arise off the cushion. Furthermore, sitting with those feelings provides a basis for understanding, empathy, and freedom of choice when one is confronted with another's anger or hatred.)

I concur with the assertion of those who teach mindfulness meditation that people are capable of great compassion and that people can choose to grow in compassion. An important part of this process is the ability to connect deeply with whom one is each moment. The teaching underscores the implied aim of developing loving-kindness. If one can listen to the teaching and shift one's focus away from some sort of self-improvement project toward acceptance of whom one is -- bumps, warts, beauty, and all-- one will have already begun to practice a degree of compassion.

In discussing the nature of reality, I showed that in the process of formation, each occasion of experience prehends possibilities offered by God as initial aims. All the way along the vast continuum of existence, possibilities are present. Openness to oneself cannot help but entail openness to possibility. So, although this discussion began with the direction that the view, or intent, one is to bring to this practice is one of self-acceptance, the following discussions will explore how self-acceptance may lead to an increase of awareness and, in turn, may support the pastoral counselling goals of psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

God's Presence

Recognition of God's presence and action in creation is central to understanding how mindfulness meditation aids in facilitating psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Through God's presence in creation, all entities enjoy the possibility of creativity, freedom, and novelty. God is present in and through all creation, persuading creation to actualize increasing depth, complexity, intensity, value, and love. God's immanent, caring presence allows for the possibility that increased value may be realized. If the nature of God and of reality were otherwise, if self-transcendence, creativity, and change were not possible, then discussion of healing and growth would be meaningless. That, however, is not the case. Even in the most oppressive situations, God's presence means that creativity, novelty, and growth are possible. This does not disallow the existence of evil in the world, nor does it disregard the real limitations placed on creative response by the environment, or by one's physical and emotional constitution. It does, however, underscore the fact that in God's presence exist the possibilities for healing and growth.

The possibility for freedom and creativity exist throughout creation, even in the most restricted and horrific situations. Victor Frankl, concentration camp survivor and founder of logotherapy, argued that even in the midst of the concentration camps, where one had almost no control over the circumstances of one's life, one could still choose one's own attitude toward suffering.⁴ God's presence and the possibilities for freedom, creativity, and novelty are important to the practice of pastoral counselling for at least three reasons.

⁴Victor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, rev. ed. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984).

First, God's presence means that pastoral counsellors and clients have an ally in their work. God is present in each and working with them for the realization of the best of possibilities. As Brizee contends, this provides both counsellor and client with cause to hope.⁵

Secondly, God's presence means that each life has inherent value not only to the individual but also to creation and to God. Every event of our lives is saved eternally in God's own life.⁶ Every event also has the potential to affect all subsequent events. Even the tiniest of changes are valued and have the potential to affect other changes. Therefore, counsellors and clients have cause to value themselves and each other. This gives them the seeds necessary for trust in basic goodness and openness to their experience.

Thirdly, the possibilities for freedom, creativity, and novelty mean that the changes sought through the pastoral counselling relationship *may* be possible. Even when the desired changes may be out of reach, one still has a degree of power and can meaningfully contribute to creation and to God. Each moment new possibilities exist, and each moment each individual has some power to actualize new possibilities. Change is possible and the power to effect change exists in and through the beings of both client and counsellor.

Awareness and Psychological and Spiritual Healing and Growth

Awareness is central to psychological and spiritual development. It plays a significant role in a human being's capacity to recognize and respond creatively to God's will. Our

⁵Robert Brizee, Where in the World is God?: God's Presence in Every Moment of Our Lives (Nashville: Upper Room, 1987), 72.

⁶Ibid, 71.

ability to exercise our power to actualize the best of possibilities each moment is enhanced by awareness. If we understand spirit to be self-transcending-self, awareness is central to the ability to see and choose one's primary mode of being in the world. On a deep level, spirit is that life force present in each entity, including human beings, which connects with God's secret impulse toward the actualization of increasing goodness, value, and love in the world. It is the urge behind any effort at self-transcendence. Awareness that allows individuals to develop increased sensitivity to spirit and to connect with God's persuasive presence is central to accomplishing both the pastoral counselling aims for healing and growth, and God's aim for increases in intensity of experience through increasing depth.

Awareness is the capacity to see, know, and experience what is and what may be. It includes, but is not limited, to sensation, rationality, and intuition. It is a faculty of spirit. In normal waking states, the mind receives and processes enormous amounts of data from numerous sources. Human existence relies on the processes by which our constituent actual occasions receive, sort, and decide, which data to incorporate into themselves, which to transmit to future occasions, and what form such transmissions may take. The vast majority of these processes occur on an unconscious level.

In the terminology of process philosophy, consciousness is experienced only in higher order entities and only at the end of the process of concrescence, if it occurs at all. If we look only at the sense data that is potentially available to consciousness, we find that of all of the data that are potentially available to consciousness, only a very minute part usually reaches our awareness. Take, for example, the sense data involved in an experience of walking. In each moment, thousands of physical sensations are potentially available for

conscious experience: the touch of foot on floor, hip muscles flexing, knee joints shifting, tensing of stomach muscles, shoulders tightening, mouth swallowing, every inch of our bodies is tremendously stimulated in the physical process of walking. Usually, only the tiniest portion of these sensations reach awareness.

Our visual faculties also receive a workout in the simple act of walking, our eyes move from object to object, sensing distance, size, space, and colour. The same is true of hearing. Rarely do we notice the sound of our clothes moving or the birds in the trees outside. Much of this information remains unconscious.

The sitting practice of mindfulness meditation places a very broad limit on the data potentially available to our senses. The posture, the soft focus of the eyes, the absence of speech and movement combine to limit the data potentially available to sensory perception. Two possible responses to limiting the diversity of data available to the senses are habituation, and heightened sensitivity and enhanced awareness.

Though habituation is a common response, experiences of heightened sensitivity to experience show the vast richness of data that are potentially available to awareness at any given time. As God is present in each moment of experience, enhanced sensitivity to experience potentially leads to enhanced sensitivity to God. Mindfulness meditation enables individuals to gain familiarity with both responses. With familiarity, an individual's ability to recognize moments when awareness is lacking, and their ability to choose to open to the richness of experience are both enhanced. For pastoral counsellors, the moments of heightened sensitivity and enhanced awareness experienced during meditation indicate that contacting the vast richness of experience is possible. Insofar as mindfulness

meditation can enhance an individual's familiarity with both responses, it may be seen to be a valuable tool for pastoral counselling. The following descriptions of meditation experiences provide illustrations of both habituation and of heightened sensitivity to experience. They support my contention that mindfulness meditation is able to help individuals grow in their awareness of both responses and enhance an individual's ability to choose to open themselves to the richness that is potentially available.

Habituation refers to the state of ignorance that results from repeated exposure to the same stimuli. With habituation, the individual literally comes to ignore the repeated stimuli. For example, urban fire departments have had to develop elaborate sirens, because city dwellers have become so familiar with the sounds of bells and whistles that many no longer even hear them. In other words, they have become habituated to them. Another common example of habituation is seen in the experience of eating when, after the first few mouthfuls of food, the sharpness of taste no longer reaches awareness. All three types of repression discussed in Chapter 8-- first and second stage psychic repression and transmutation -- may play a part in habituation.

Habituation may be at least partially responsible for the experience of drowsiness frequently reported by meditators. When people first begin practising mindfulness meditation, they often experience episodes of drowsiness. Some even fall asleep, only to wake with a start as their body starts to sway with sleep. In my experience, drowsiness begins when slowly and steadily I become less aware of my body, my breathing, and my surroundings. Sitting quiet and still, my mind becomes so used to the sensations in my body and the sights and sounds of the room that it stops recognizing these stimuli. It is

likely that at those moments, because of habituation, less stimuli are recognized as relevant on all levels of my being, and so, are not admitted into awareness. As that occurs, I often begin to hold a tighter focus on my thoughts. There have been times when I have been sitting that I have found myself holding so tight to the practice instructions, that with the tiniest emergence of a thought, I immediately label it thinking, and return to my breath. I have become so focussed that I might label thinking two or three times to each breath. At those times, I have become oblivious to most of the rest of my experience and, within minutes, I usually experience the first edges of drowsiness. The experience of drowsiness can be quite hypnotic. Rather than sitting with awareness, one falls asleep. Meditation teachers often refer to this quality of sleepiness as *ignorance* and suggest that a remedy is to let go of thinking and holding tight to the technique, allow oneself to be aware of the larger environment, and experience an increased sense of spaciousness. With practice, this drowsiness is experienced less often.

Habituation experienced as drowsiness during meditation is an extreme example of habituation that occurs throughout the ordinary waking experience of most human beings. On one level, because of the high probability that clients will experience drowsiness and sleep, understanding the drowsiness experienced in meditation in terms of habituation is useful for pastoral counsellors, for it gives pastoral counsellors a way of helping their clients work with their experiences of sleepiness and come to embrace greater sensitivity and awareness of their experience. On another level, as habituation results in a deadening of awareness of the potential vibrancy and richness of life, both during and away from meditation practice, understanding the dynamics involved in habituation also gives pastoral

counsellors insight into how human beings ignore much of our ordinary waking experience and thereby lose access to data that can potentially enhance the richness of our lived experience. What is experienced during meditation as drowsiness due to habituation to limited stimuli is only a more extreme example of what is experienced throughout much of ordinary waking life.

Another possible response to the limited input of sensory data during meditation is the opposite of habituation. Limiting the amount of sensory data available to awareness serves to provide a container, in which one can come to experience heightened sensitivity to, and an enhanced awareness of, the data present each moment.

People are often surprised by the changes they experience in sense perception during sitting meditation. These are not altered states of consciousness in the ordinary definition of the term -- they are not drug-induced, nor would they usually be classified as ecstatic experiences. They are, however, altered states of consciousness in the sense that they are conscious experiences that are different from what is usually experienced in the individual's normal waking state. For example, individuals may become completely enchanted with the pattern of the grain in the wood floor, mesmerized by the checkered pattern of the shirt of another person, startled when the air conditioner shuts off, or startled that the hum had gone unnoticed until it was suddenly gone.

The individual may not be moving, yet that does not eliminate the sense of touch or feel. Instead, at times, it tends to heighten it. One tends to spend significant amounts of time attending to even the slightest sensation. A fly landing on one's hand for example, might feel excruciating. An itch may come to feel enormous. It is not usual for people to

report that they experience a dramatic amplification of sensitivity to sight, sound, touch, taste, and feeling, when they are meditating. A million and one sensations rise to consciousness, once one sits still.

These experiences are all quite ordinary, yet they are also quite profound. They are ordinary, because they are all potentially available to any human being. They are profound, because they indicate the vast richness of experience that is potentially available to us that most often remains unconscious. I provide these descriptions here, because they support my contention that there is richness, intensity, and vibrancy in life that is potentially available to human experience, even though much of this richness is prevented from contributing to conscious experience and to the healing and growth of human beings.

Sense Perception and Repression: Transmutation

In the normal course of life, we receive a tremendous amount of data through our senses. Process thinkers have pointed out that most sense perception involves a process of transmutation. In Chapter 8, I described transmutation as the process by which a group of actual occasions are identified by a shared characteristic. In transmutation, the perceived data are transmitted to the dominant occasion of experience as broad stroke interpretations of the original stimulus. In sense perception, transmutation is not limited to the simplification of perceptions transmitted to our minds so that, rather than perceiving a million vibrating molecules, we see a cup. Buchanan contends that “transmutation is a dominating fact of the concrescent process, and, at present, a necessary aspect of human experience. However, an unfortunate effect of transmutation is that it suppresses conscious awareness of the multiplicity, emotionality, and activity inherent to the universe

-- and thus tends to desensitize us to the environment, and to cut us off from feeling and intuition."⁷ Transmutation eliminates much of our awareness of the existing diversity of detail.

For the most part, transmutation is an unconscious process that enhances the adaptive capabilities of the individual by preventing the mind from being paralysed by an overload of stimuli. Human existence relies on the process by which our constituent actual occasions receive, sort, and decide which data to incorporate into themselves, which to transmit to future occasions, and what form such transmissions may take.

If nothing else, a heightened awareness of sense perception helps one tune into the zest, intensity, richness, and vibrancy of life that are potentially available to human experience. It is my contention, furthermore, that the richness of conscious experience is heightened proportionately with the amount and quality of sensate data that is allowed to enter and inform our experience. In the following discussion, I will show how mindfulness meditation can help lessen the effects of repression mechanisms, and thereby contribute to the psychological healing and growth of pastoral counselling clients.

One effect of mindfulness meditation, is that repression of sense experience tends to be gently eroded. I have already alluded to the role that transmutation can play in sense perception. Because of transmutation, our senses present to our mind only a broad-stroke interpretation of the data they perceive. It may appear trivial that we can experience an increased awareness of an itch on our face, or that during meditation, there are times when

⁷John Buchanan, Universal Feeling: Whitehead and Psychology, Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1994 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994), 492.

sense perception is more acute. As trivial as that may seem, such a heightening of sense perception can have a tremendous impact on conscious functioning.

The moments of heightened awareness of sense perception during the practice of sitting meditation indicate that the broad-stroke interpretations active in transmutation are open to change. If one is able to experience greater breadth and depth of sense perceptions while sitting (to notice the quality and vibrancy of the itch), then it is possible for the repression of sense data effective in transmutation to diminish.

Experiences of heightened awareness of sense perception are not limited to experiences while meditating. The awareness of the potential depth of sensory experience can carry over into post-meditation experience. Repeated experiences of lifting the repression barrier active in transmutation, without overwhelming the mind with data, enhances the potential for lifting the barrier in post-meditation experience. For example, during a meal, a woman may become aware that she has been mindlessly eating her dinner: half her meal is gone and she has not really noticed what she has eaten. This experience is similar to when an awareness of lack of mindfulness, during meditation, is prompted by noticing something is missing. For example, when the air conditioning shuts off and the lack of stimuli prompts the recognition that one had not noticed the hum until it was missing. In that moment there arises a possibility of choosing to increase one's receptivity to sense experience. In that moment of awareness, the woman can choose to stop and relish the next mouthful of food and the mouthful after that.

Wilber speaks of the first developmental threshold in the evolution of human consciousness being that of differentiating the physical self from the physical environment.

Transmutation may be partly responsible for enabling this differentiation. The infant's mind may not possess the capability of receiving the stimuli from the environment without being overwhelmed. Transmutation condenses experience into broad-strokes, which are then transmitted as manageable chunks of data to the mind. The infant's mind can then work with the data and begin the process of differentiating *me* from *not me*.

Wilber's second developmental threshold involves emotional differentiation. The third developmental threshold involves the differentiation of mind from body. It would appear that some repression is necessary, if the mind is to be able to negotiate the first three fulcrums and differentiate its physical body from the physical environment, its emotions from emotional others, and itself from its own body and emotions. Transmutation assists in each of these achievements, by refining the focus of data into manageable wholes.

In Wilber's model, the developmental process consists of moving from identification, to differentiation, to reintegration at a new and higher level. As consciousness evolves and grows in its ability to receive and process information, and to embody greater degrees of complexity, consciousness also grows in its ability to reintegrate complex data. When consciousness has gained in strength and capacity, much of the repression necessary for an infant is no longer as essential. Part of what one begins to appreciate through the practice of sitting meditation is that one is able to tolerate greater degrees of sensory input and not become overwhelmed, or flooded, by one's experience. The mind can maintain its integrity and hold in dynamic contrast significantly greater amounts of sensate, emotional, and rational data.

Although repression through transmutation may be essential to the process of

differentiation, reintegration is also essential for psychological growth. The degree of repression through transmutation required for the mind to accomplish the task of differentiation may undermine the process of reintegration. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation can help individuals grow in their capacity to tolerate greater amounts of data without becoming overwhelmed, and as that growth may serve to enhance psychological development, mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counselling.

Synchronization of Body and Mind

I contend that experiences of enhanced sense perception during the mindfulness meditation are not experiences of a pre-differentiated blissful union with sensate experience. Rather, because individuals are able to have these experiences *and maintain a degree of awareness* throughout, these experiences are best understood as indicating an awakening to the reunification and synchronization of body and mind.

Synchronization, as used here, does not refer to a manipulative effort on the part of the mind to control the body or to perform any particular task. In mindfulness meditation, no effort is made to change the ground of experience, or to control or repress the body or sensation. Sensation is not considered good or bad in the sense of something to be sought or avoided, it is simply noticed, without grasping or pushing away. Synchronization refers to the reintegration of mind and body, in which the mind transcends and is able to maintain awareness of the body and experiences of the body, and yet not repress the body.

The heightened awareness of sense perceptions experienced as a result of mindfulness meditation is not to be equated with an experience of pre-differentiated bliss similar to that known by an infant, because unlike pre-differentiated bliss, these meditation experiences

are experiences of awareness. What distinguishes the heightened awareness of sensory perceptions from the infantile state of pre-differentiated bliss is the element of awareness. One can maintain sufficient differentiation from sensations, so that the mind is not overwhelmed by the received data.

For pastoral counsellors wishing to understand how mindfulness meditation is able to help facilitate the synchronization of mind and body, I suggest that the answer lies in the technique of returning one's attention to the out-breath. Unlike some meditation practices that encourage the practitioner to stay focussed on the breath, attending to both inhalation and exhalation, the instructions for this practice mention only the out-breath. As breathing is a bodily experience, returning attention to the out-breath is an instruction that has the potential to bring a person back to their body. In mentioning only the out-breath in the instruction, however, practitioners are discouraged from making the breath the sole object of attention. Pema Chödrön tells of one meditator's response to following only the out-breath. "I once explained this technique to a friend who had spent years doing a very focussed concentration on both the in- and out-breaths as well as another object. She said, 'But that's impossible! . . . There's a whole part where there's nothing to be aware of!'"⁸ The direction to return one's attention to the out-breath builds in a mechanism that repeatedly reunites body and mind. In limiting the instruction to the out-breath, however, there is a built in mechanism to help the meditator relax and let go. In relaxing and letting go, meditators have the opportunity to simply rest and open to their experience.

There are two final points to be highlighted with respect to experiences of heightened

⁸Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart, 19.

awareness of sensory perception and the ability maintain awareness without being overwhelmed. The first is the necessity for an individual to have already successfully negotiated the first three developmental thresholds described by Wilber. If the individual has not already attained a satisfactory degree of differentiation and re-integration on these three levels, there is a risk of the individual regressing into a pre-differentiated state with the boundaries between self and other collapsing. The boundaries between self and other on physical, emotional, and psychological levels need to be sufficiently established to enable the mind to experience an increase of transmission of data without being overwhelmed. Persons who suffer from psychosis, narcissistic personality disorder, or borderline personality disorder may not have developed these necessary structures.

The second point is that individuals who have attained sufficient differentiation leading to a stable sense of self may have occasions when they will regress to lower levels of consciousness. Those times of regression, however, will be temporary. The mind may become temporarily overwhelmed by the increased openness and receptivity to data, and yet possess enough stability and strength to re-emerge after regressive episodes. The self that is able to do that, to regress to a state of identification and then re-differentiate and reintegrate on higher levels, emerges with greater psychic energy at its disposal. Pastoral counsellors may view the episodes of regression that occur during a meditation session as serving psychological growth. Similar to the way flexing a muscle has potential to enhance strength and endurance, experiences of greater receptivity to sensory perception, without becoming overwhelmed, have the potential to strengthen or enhance the mind. Those experiences, furthermore, reinforce those aspects in the mind that value toleration

and actualization of increased intensity, complexity, beauty, and ultimately love.

Sense Perceptions and the Ability to Love

Perhaps transmutation is one of the factors that is at work in the perpetuation of racism, so that a person truly does only see a stereotype of a black man, or an Hispanic woman, or a white child. The individual does not notice the richness, character, and qualities of the human being, but subsumes them all under one class. God's will is for an increase of value, intensity, complexity, and love in this world. Attending to an openness to diversity of detail in human relations may help serve that aim.

In our pastoral counselling work with clients, and in our desire to love and serve them well, our ability to do so will be in direct proportion to our ability to know them and receive them into our selves. In part, we do that through our ability to be open and aware of our sense perceptions. These perceptions are pre-rational, in that they come to us prior to reflection and exist in receptive awareness. Receptive awareness, however, provides data for our reflective awareness. In reflective awareness, we have an opportunity to exercise our will, reason, and wisdom in discerning how to act and how to love.

If mindfulness meditation can help people grow in their ability to receive greater depth of sense perceptions into awareness, then this practice may be beneficial for pastoral counsellors as well as clients. If pastoral counsellors can expand the data available for reflective awareness, that data may help them to perceive accurately and respond to their clients in acceptance and love.

Sense perception, or perception in the mode of presentational immediacy, is a predominate mode of perception in human beings. In Wilber's model, the first levels are

those of differentiating self from others: my body from the environment, my emotions from the emotions of others, and my mind from my body and emotions. The emphasis in this model on the need for reintegration, and not dissociation, underscores the relationship of human beings to the larger environment. The process of differentiating self from the environment is foundational for the growth and development of consciousness. Up to this point, I have examined sense perceptions of the external world. The next section will examine sense perceptions of the internal world, or the emotional world of the individual.

Emotions

Sensations and emotions are intimately related. We experience our emotions in and through our physical bodies. Through the symbolic ordering of experience, children learn early to identify and name particular sensations, or clusters of physical experiences, as being particular emotions. As with sense perception of the external world, transmutation is also in effect in sense perception of one's internal world and emotional experience. This results in much of the richness of emotional life being muted in consciousness. As God's presence is known in every occasion of experience, and as God aims at the increase of intensity of experience, and as emotions are a vital aspect of human experience, our ability to perceive and experience the fullness of our emotional life enhances our ability to perceive and respond creatively to God's aim for us.

Wilber argues that neuroses are the particular pathologies that emerge as a result of unsuccessful, or partial, negotiation of the third developmental threshold: the stage of the differentiation of mind from body and emotion. He suggests neuroses result from the repression of emotions and impulses. This repression is not rooted in transmutation. It is

repression that emerges in the mind as a result of an activity of the mind itself. In seeking to differentiate from emotions and body, the mind may go too far and repress aspects of its own emotionality, or its own physicality.

The mind does this through various methods. Sometimes, the mind entreats the body to repress various physical sensations. Here, the dominant occasion of experience issues a directive to the sense organs and receptive centers of the human being to devalue, or to negatively prehend particular emotional experiences or impulses. If the dominant occasion of experience is successful in this endeavor, the result is the development of neurosis.

A second way the mind, or the dominant occasion of experience, may engage in dissociation or repression occurs within the activity of the mind itself. Here, the dominant occasion receives the data transmitted from actual entities throughout the body, yet it is received as a negative prehension. Buchanan describes this as first stage psychic repression within the dominant occasion itself. If the data are received as positive prehensions, these prehensions may be deemed trivial or of little value in the second stage of concrescence, resulting in second stage psychic repression with those prehensions being prevented from contributing to the formation of the dominant occasion of experience.

Mindfulness meditation provides a container for the mind to begin to relax these repressive urges or tendencies. As such, it is a useful tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to further the psychological healing and growth of their clients. Just as the very simple physical sensations of the external environment are potentially heightened through this meditation practice, and made available for awareness and reintegration into conscious experience, the potential exists for physical sensations associated with emotion to rise to

consciousness and become reintegrated within conscious experience.

Body Armouring

We experience emotions as bodily sensations and our bodies are often the means by which our mind represses our experience of particular emotions. What may begin as an experience of heightened awareness of a particular physical sensation, may be the leading edge of a physical sensation involved in the repression of a particular emotion or impulse. Reporting of experiences of tension in specific parts of the body is not unusual for mindfulness meditation practitioners. For example, one client frequently experienced a knot in her stomach when she practised mindfulness meditation. At first, because she did not like the sensation, she resisted it. She tried many ways to make the sensation disappear: shifting her position, refraining from sitting after a meal or when she was hungry, focussing intently on her breath. Although she did not like the sensation, over time she found she could relax and stop trying to make the sensation go away. When she relaxed with her experience, she discovered her experience of the *knot in her gut* shifted. With that shift, she became aware of feeling angry and scared. Her experience is one example of the dismantling of body armouring. Clients who have adopted body armouring as a way of repressing unwanted emotions may catch the first glimmers of those emotions as uncomfortable physical sensations.

I am sure most people have seen how children struggle with their bodies when they seek with their minds to control or contain emotions. I am reminded of an instance when my young niece, at the age of 2, was overwhelmed with anger and sadness. I watched her struggle to contain these emotions by tightening her fists and shoulders and clenching her

jaw. In Canadian culture, we tend to recognize a trembling lip as indicating sadness. We interpret the trembling lip as an indication of effort on the part of the individual to contain an emotional experience, usually sadness. This method of using the body to contain or repress emotion may become habitual. If it becomes habitual, it can become entrenched as an unconscious response, so that one is no longer aware of the sensation of tightening a part of the body, much less of the emotion the tightening originally aimed at suppressing.

In body armouring, individuals are at war with themselves. Their bodies experience feelings and emotions that they seek to transmit to the mind. The mind, however, refuses to accept the feelings. The mind is not able to stop the feelings from arising in the body with first or second stage psychic repression. Instead it exerts energy to prevent the emotions from reaching conscious experience. This form of repression requires a sustained expenditure of psychic energy. As long as the body continues to transmit the particular unwanted emotion to the mind, and as long as the mind refuses to accept that emotion, the mind remains fixated on the emotion, because it must continue to expend energy to keep that emotion repressed. As with other forms of repression, this response can become habitual and, with habituation, it drops from awareness.

As with the other forms of repression I have discussed, mindfulness meditation can provide a container in which this form of repression is gently dissolved. Inasmuch as mindfulness meditation is able to do this, it is valuable to pastoral counselling.

Culture and Emotion

The ability to experience emotion is part of the basic structure of existence available to human beings. Around the globe, human beings are able to experience joy and sadness,

anger and affection, desire and fear, and numerous other feelings and emotions. The meaning and value attributed to the experience and expression of emotion, however, relies heavily on cultural context. As any context is also always embedded context, any given human being may identify with several different cultures. An individual's cultures may include the culture of his or her ancestors, home community, city, province, and nation. Each of the individual's cultures influence the meaning and value of emotional experience and expression. For example, in identifying myself within my cultural context, I could say I am a *single-white-Belgian-English-rural/urban-Christian-Canadian-woman*. I could then list numerous cultures that supplement my identity and influence my understanding of myself and the world. Each of these cultures shape what I value, how I think, how I relate to my emotional experience, and how I express my emotions. Culture influences how I relate to my emotions. It does not, however, influence whether or not I have emotions.

The value a person's culture attributes to specific emotions influences that person's openness to recognizing and consciously experiencing those emotions. An individual whose culture views sadness as a less than desirable emotion, may be resistant not only to expressing sadness, but also to experiencing sadness. Should that individual experience sadness, that individual may fear the experience of sadness might lead to being personally devalued by his or her community. The fear of being devalued may then be associated with sadness, and may even become the predominant emotional experience. If that individual's culture also devalues fear, the fear itself may become repressed, so that neither it, nor the original sadness, is allowed to enter conscious awareness. The emotions continue to affect the human being, but as they are not a part of the individual's conscious

experience, not only does the individual have limited capability for creative response, the individual also has less psychic energy available, because some of that potential energy is directed to warding off the undesired emotion.

Each culture provides its members with distinct patterns of value related to emotions. Each individual, therefore, will have their own unique pattern of values related to emotions and to emotional expression. It is not unusual for pastoral counselling clients to value one set of emotions as *good* and another set as *bad*, according to cultural expectations and values. Nor is it unusual for pastoral counseling clients to report experiencing difficulty with emotions they consider unwanted and therefore bad.

Pastoral counsellors using mindfulness meditation as a tool in their practice to help themselves and their clients experience, differentiate, transcend, and reintegrate repressed emotions, need to attend to the role culture plays the repression of emotions. In the discussion of scripts and thinking, I will explore how mindfulness meditation helps individuals recognize, differentiate from, and transcend rule/role mind. Inasmuch as cultural values affecting emotional repression are reinforced by thoughts and cultural scripts, the arguments of that section will show how mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate psychological growth on that level.

Emotions and God

God's aim for human growth and development is toward increasing ability to actualize depth, complexity, creativity, value, and love. In following this leading from God, clients need to differentiate from their emotions, transcend them, and then reintegrate on a higher level. For much of its history, however, the Christian church has promoted repression of

emotions, as well as, repression of the body, rather than transcendence.⁹ Although this may have encouraged a measure of increased development of will, responsibility, and reason, it did not serve to further human wholeness, for whatever is repressed is not transcended. If emotions, will, reason, and morality are different aspects of the psyche, it is possible to direct attention and energy to the development of one area and neglect, or even suppress, development of another. It may be that limited psychic energy demands choices be made where to attain excellence in one area, other areas are consequently given less attention. Yet as the consciousness of our clients evolves, greater amounts of psychic energy seem to be more generally available, allowing greater balance in their growth.

Increased value and intensity are attained through actualizing increased depth in one or more developmental lines, as well as in increased breadth at each level. A mathematical genius who is unable to maintain social relationships, or an athletic protege who has the ethics of a four-year-old exhibit depth in specific developmental lines. They do not, however, exhibit the increased intensity and value that arise when depth is actualized equally throughout all developmental lines.

Both depth and breadth are desired by God. As human beings grow in spirit, they grow not only in their capacity to experience and hold in creative contrast the various physical sensations of their body, they also grow in their capacity to experience and transcend their emotions. As they are able to do so, emotion and body amplify the amount of available energy available to the self.

⁹John B. Cobb, Jr., Theology and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 26.

If, as has been argued, God is present in every moment of our existence, God is also present in our emotional experiences. Our clients' perception of God's presence in their emotions may be distorted through habitual responses, through the various forms of repression, or through distortions of value. Inasmuch as it is possible for our clients to grow in their awareness of their emotions, they can grow in their potential to know God and respond creatively to God's will. Conversely, inasmuch as our clients continue to repress or deny their emotions, they cut themselves off from a rich source of knowledge and encouragement from God. In the following section I discuss how mindfulness meditation is able to assist in the emotional growth of pastoral counselling clients.

Mindfulness Meditation and Emotions

The practice instructions provide two techniques to assist meditators to experience their emotions without being overwhelmed by them. One is returning attention to the breath. The other is labelling thoughts, emotions, and sensations as thinking.

Although during meditation, individuals may become temporarily overwhelmed, over-identified, or paralysed by a particular aspect of their experience, there does come a moment when they are aware that this has happened. At the instant when the individuals become aware that they have become momentarily subsumed, overwhelmed, or undifferentiated from their experience, and those instances of awareness do arise, the instruction is to return attention to the out-breath and to go out with the breath.

The instruction to go out with the breath is a reminder to the mind to *touch and go*. While one might not be able to grasp onto particular thoughts, or emotions, or concepts in the process, one's breath is always there. One may struggle at times to return one's

attention to the breath, but the breath is always there. A person may lose awareness of the breath, and one may even temporarily stop breathing, but eventually, another breath will come. As long as one is alive, one is breathing. In that sense, the breath is reliable. It is present. The breath is a built in ladder, as it were, for the mind to use to climb out of an undifferentiated state. In this manner, practitioners of mindfulness meditation can experience their state of being and touch the edges of their mind's ability to hold in awareness the richness of contrast and depth of experience without losing equilibrium. If, or when, equilibrium is lost, the practice of returning to the out-breath enables the mind to restore itself. Returning attention to the out-breath shifts one's focus from one's emotional experience and helps one reconnect with a greater sense of space. Returning to the breath may serve as a *learned response* to the recognition of experiences of both mindlessness and of being overwhelmed, both during meditation and when away from the cushion.

The technique of labelling emotions and sensations as *thinking* is another way the practice instructions help persons experience and differentiate from their emotions, and in differentiating, to transcend them. The label thinking is itself a thought, yet it is a thought that comes in response to the moment of awareness that one is experiencing something. As with the technique of returning to the breath, applying the label thinking becomes a conditioned response to moments of awareness. If a meditator can apply the label thinking, they have some degree of awareness of their experience, and some distance from it. The part of them that recognizes the emotion, thought, or sensation, is not the emotion, thought or sensation itself. It is the mind.

In my experience as a meditator and as a pastoral counsellor who has used mindfulness

meditation in my counselling practice, I have found that fear is often the predominant feeling responsible for decisions to distance oneself from one's experience. Mindfulness meditation provides a relatively safe method to get to know one's fear. This practice can help individuals come to know what objects arouse their fear, how they may try to protect themselves, and how they may attempt to stir up and perpetuate particular emotions including fear. In gaining familiarity with these processes, individuals are able to develop confidence that they can sit with their own experience and not be destroyed by it. With this confidence comes a greater degree of freedom.

In a manner similar to the way individuals can experience heightened awareness of their sense perceptions when away from the cushion, individuals can also develop a greater degree of awareness of their emotions when they are not meditating. Individuals may find themselves driving in rush hour traffic, for example, and in moments of awareness recognize they are anxious. They may also notice that their anxiety is what is driving their cursing out the poor individual whose engine has overheated. The response of thinking and going out with the breath can help create space, even in rush hour traffic.

The meditation instructions do not encourage one to examine one's emotions during sitting practice, because such examination would be more thinking. In post-meditation experience, meditators are able to reflect on their meditation experiences, including their predominant emotional responses to sensations and thoughts. Counselling sessions can provide clients with opportunities to examine their meditation experiences. In helping clients to articulate their experiences, pastoral counsellors can encourage the processes of differentiation, transcendence, and reintegration necessary for healing and growth.

Thinking: Scripts

Discursive thought is likely the most prominent content in human awareness. When physical sensations and emotions are present in our awareness, they are usually accompanied by some form of discursive thought. We often recognize our physical sensations and emotions by talking about them to ourselves. As mentioned in the previous discussion of emotions, children learn through language to identify particular impulses or clusters of sensations as particular feelings. The symbol of that emotion becomes the content of consciousness and often the richness of sensations or impulses themselves is excluded from awareness. For example, when a woman states she is angry, and is asked how she experiences her anger, she may have to pause and reflect, before being able to identify the sensations that occurred before she recognized in thought that she was angry.

When the meditation teachers refer to discursive thought, they refer to the phenomena of speaking silently in our minds to ourselves. Discursive thought arises in the later stages of emergence of consciousness, and it most often takes the form of words. Words are symbols. In process thought, discursive thought is a highly sophisticated example of perception in the mode of symbolic reference.

The pathology related to the fourth developmental threshold is script pathology. In negotiating this level of differentiation and reintegration, the task of the self is to separate from ascribed roles and identities. Discursive thoughts are particularly relevant to the maintenance and the dismantling of script pathology.

Jill Freeman, a mindfulness meditation practitioner, wrote a song describing meditation experience. The words of the refrain are: “This is who I am, this is who I am, this is who

I am . . .”¹⁰ This is an apt description of the nature of much of our discursive thought.

With great regularity the contents of our thoughts tell us who we are.

The most obvious way our thoughts do this is by making direct statements about ourselves in our own minds. These include statements like: “Aren’t I wonderful?!” or “I want . . .,” or “I can’t . . .,” and so on. These thoughts may serve to reinforce particular images, scripts, or roles that we have adopted. We literally talk to ourselves in our mind and tell ourselves who we are through our story lines about ourselves related to the past and to the future. We may replay an encounter we had earlier that day, for example, and tell ourselves the story again and again. Perhaps in retelling the story, we may change it and propose alternate versions to ourselves. The discursive focus on an event, to some extent, reinforces our identification with that event.

Not only do we replay events from memory, we may use our thoughts to reactivate and reinforce emotions about past events. We may also replay events from our memory to reinforce emotions about an unconscious, undifferentiated, role or script. For example, a pastoral counselling client may have adopted a script from his family of origin that he will never amount to anything. Accompanying that script, may be feelings of sadness and hopelessness, alternating with anger. That client may continue to identify with the script by replaying events that support the belief. Even if in retelling the story he changes it so he is successful, he reinforces the script pathology, because the story line centres around an event that is emotionally tied to the script. The same may also be true for our stories

¹⁰Jill Freeman, “Way Back When It Was Now,” Songs of Sex and Depression, Magic Records, n.d.

about the future: all of the plans, schemes, and fantasies we create for ourselves in our minds *may serve to reinforce a script pathology.*

It is not that there is anything inherently pathological in recalling the past, or planning the future. The point is that these story lines *may serve to reinforce undifferentiated beliefs about oneself.* In so doing, they *may diminish the freedom an individual has to experience their self-identity in a broader context.*

Through mindfulness meditation practice, pastoral counselling clients can become aware of the thoughts that fill their mind and pull them to and fro. They may also gain awareness of how their thought processes reinforce and construct whom they believe themselves to be. This awareness can extend to the cultural expectations and values that they have internalized. The particular scripts they have adopted, which dictate what roles they are to play within the community, reflect these cultural expectations and values.

The point is not that growth and development free individuals from taking on roles. Nor is it that roles are inherently detrimental to psychological healing and growth. The point is that unless an individual can differentiate from attributed roles and scripts, part of the self will remain attached to them and will demand psychic energy to reinforce and recreate the scripts. The practice of mindfulness meditation can help pastoral counselling clients recognize and differentiate from attributed roles and scripts and, thereby, aid them in choosing, with creativity and freedom, how and when they may assume various roles in their lives.

Mindfulness Meditation and Will

In Chapter 5, it was shown that God supplies each emerging occasion with an initial

aim. The occasion itself has its own subjective aim and on the basis of that subjective aim, decides what data to include in itself in its actualization. Although it is not a conscious application of will as we normally understand consciousness, it is the most basic example of decision determining outcome, and it is made in response to the occasion's feeling awareness of its own initial aim and other data. It is arguably the most basic example of the exercise of will. Will, therefore, exists through the entire spectrum of evolution.

The dominant occasion of experience also possesses will and has the ability to influence the development of will within other occasions of experience in the human being. Will is a crucial factor in the process of the evolution of consciousness.

The practice of mindfulness meditation is a useful tool for developing strength of will. The simple act of choosing each day to sit quietly with oneself requires both decision and exercise of will. Setting a time, deciding on how long to sit, and then sitting, requires a degree of ego strength. In North America, it is rare that a person does not have a multitude of potential demands and distractions calling for their attention. Choosing to sit and *do nothing* may seem like a simple task, yet it is commonly reported that the most difficult thing about this practice is actually getting oneself to the cushion and then staying there for the allotted time. Making the decision to sit and keeping it, helps to build confidence in one's ability to choose and follow through. This is the first aspect of how mindfulness meditation practice aids in the development of will.

It also takes a degree of will to maintain awareness while sitting and to bring oneself back to the out breath when one notices one has drifted off into fantasy or sleep. When the meditation instructors speak of the need for discipline, they refer to the development

of will to apply the technique. Mindfulness meditation requires a particular type of exertion, for there is nothing to *grasp onto* in this practice. Thoughts, words, fantasies, images, and sensations all arise during the practice of mindfulness meditation and each is to be treated the same: recognized and labelled as thinking and then let go. It takes an exertion of the will to dis-identify with the thoughts, feelings, etc., and apply the label thinking. It requires a further exertion of the will to return one's attention to the out-breath. The paradox involved in the practice, however, is that will itself must be transcended if, a person is to be able to *let go* and rest in awareness.

Will is an essential capacity for pastoral counselling clients who seek psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Every client possesses at least some capacity to exercise their will. Some clients, however, may lack confidence in their ability to choose, to follow through on choices, or to exercise their will in any number of ways. The preceding discussion has suggested how mindfulness meditation may be useful in helping pastoral counselling clients expand their capacity to exercise their will and, in so doing, enhance the processes of psychological and spiritual growth.

Mindfulness Meditation and Spiritual Development

In her work on prayer, Marjorie Suchocki argues that to the degree that we are able to honestly name who we are to ourselves and to God, to that degree we are then open to God's creative influence in our lives and in our being.¹¹ I support her contention and assert that to be able to name who we are, we need to be able to know who we are. Who

¹¹Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), 72.

we are includes our body, emotions, thoughts, will, and awareness. This chapter has argued that mindfulness meditation is a useful tool in helping us know who we are and to open ourselves to God's creative influence in our lives and in our being.

Mindfulness meditation helps individuals know their experience of themselves and of their world. In helping individuals assume a witnessing stance, not only does mindfulness meditation assist individuals in knowing and being able to name who they are, it assists them in furthering their spiritual healing and growth. In this chapter I have shown how this meditation practice can help to dissolve various forms of repression and help individuals develop an increased awareness of a variety of human experiences. I have also shown how mindfulness meditation can assist in the development of will.

Spiritual growth, the ability of self to transcend self, is enhanced as the self grows in its ability to assume a witnessing stance of mindfulness. The process of dissolving the repression of body, emotion, and unconscious scripts and roles, has the effect of allowing the self to recognize and transcend each of these aspects of being. As we saw in Chapter 7, there are at least a dozen different developmental lines involved in the development of the self. There is an interrelatedness between these lines of development: some of the lines are necessary, but not sufficient for the development of other lines. For example, we saw how physiological development is necessary but not sufficient for cognitive development. We also saw that the necessary line may develop well beyond the sufficient part. The example given was that a person may be at a very high level of cognitive development but still be at a relatively low level of moral development. Finally, I discussed the fact that some developmental lines can never be more advanced than the others. The example

given was that ethical development cannot move ahead of interpersonal development.

Mindfulness meditation assists the self in negotiating healing and growth along each of the various major developmental lines. It does so by enabling the self to recognize the places where it is stuck, and in recognizing these places, or aspects, the self can differentiate, transcend, and reintegrate on a new and higher level. The predominant level of functioning for the self, the seat of consciousness, is determined by the predominant levels attained on each of the developmental lines. As healing and growth occurs on the various lines, the self enhances its ability to shift to higher levels of being. As it is able to do so, to shift to higher levels of being, the self grows in its ability to transcend itself, and the individual grows in spirit.

Summary

In this chapter I have supported my thesis that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in their work with their clients by presenting a theoretical understanding of *how* mindfulness meditation is able to facilitate psychological and spiritual growth. Using insights from process thought and illustrations from meditation practice, I have argued that mindfulness meditation facilitates the development of awareness. This enhanced awareness contributes to a client's ability to recognize and respond to God's will for the actualization of the best of possibilities, as evidenced in the processes of psychological growth.

Following Wilber's integral model for the evolution of consciousness, I have shown how increased awareness contributes to our clients' ability to differentiate from experiences of sense perception, emotion, and thought, to transcend each of these, and to

reintegrate these experience on a higher level of consciousness. Furthermore, I have shown how the practice of mindfulness meditation contributes to the development of will, an essential capacity for individuals seeking psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Throughout these discussions, I have shown how mindfulness meditation facilitates clients' ability to know themselves and to respond creatively to the vast richness of possibility inherent in creation. Having shown the usefulness of the practice of mindfulness meditation for pastoral counselling, I turn in the next chapter to an exploration of how pastoral counsellors may implement mindfulness meditation in their pastoral counselling practice.

CHAPTER 10

The Implementation of Mindfulness Meditation in Pastoral Counselling Practice

[Prayer and meditation] have three uses in pastoral care and counseling. They are important resources for the minister's own spiritual preparation; they can be used by the counselor on behalf of the counselee; they are skills that the counselee can be taught for use in self-healing.¹

This chapter provides a basic introduction to the use of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling practice. It is not a comprehensive *how to* manual on meditation practice or instruction. The chapter has four main sections. The first examines how and why pastoral counsellors may engage in mindfulness meditation for their personal and professional growth. The second section discusses how, when, and why pastoral counsellors may introduce this practice to their clients. The third explores difficulties in using mindfulness meditation as a tool in pastoral counselling and outlines situations where it is not likely to be useful. The fourth offers some guidelines for assessing the appropriateness of selecting mindfulness meditation as a tool for use in pastoral counselling practice.

Mindfulness Meditation and the Pastoral Counsellor

There is no substitute for first-hand experience. The practice of mindfulness meditation cannot be fully grasped by reading of books and there is no way to understand the experience vicariously by watching a video. Reading personal accounts of other

¹Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 128, cited by Merle Jordan, "Prayer and Meditation in Pastoral Care and Counselling," in Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, eds. Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 137.

meditators is helpful, but it is no substitute for the intuitive knowing that comes through personally engaging in the practice.

If a pastoral counsellor feels drawn to recommend this meditation practice to a client as an adjunct to therapy, yet is unwilling to engage in the practice, the client should be encouraged to work with a mindfulness meditation instructor. There are numerous difficulties that can arise in the practice and the ability to recognize and work with them only comes from first hand experience. The pastoral counsellor who does not meditate would have trouble knowing what to look for or how to recognize the cause of a difficulty from descriptions given by the client. It is hard to imagine how a counsellor who does not have the personal experience to draw upon could know how to respond to questions such as, "What does it mean to let go?" or, "What am I doing wrong, nothing happens?"

Mindfulness meditation is not dependent on any particular religious or cultural context. Like the Benedictine practice of waiting for God, or the Quaker practice of listening in silence, mindfulness meditation is a simple meditation practice that aims at helping people grow in their awareness of themselves, creation, and God. I have shown in the previous chapters that awareness is a faculty common to all human beings and that awareness is central to psychological and spiritual healing and growth. When people begin to speak of their experience of awareness, however, their cultural context immediately comes in to play. Words, after all, are symbols that have evolved within particular cultures and the meanings attributed to experience are shaped by culture. Meditation instructors are skilled and knowledgeable in the techniques of the practice, but for the most part, they are not therapists and therefore, are not trained in helping people work for psychological healing

and growth. The vast majority of mindfulness meditation instructors to date, furthermore, are either Buddhists, or have emerged from Buddhist traditions. They may be more comfortable speaking in terms of bodhichitta or of basic goodness, than they are speaking of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or grace.

Pastoral counsellors have the ability to conceptualize, comprehend, and work with the interrelatedness of psyche and spirit as they support the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. Pastoral counsellors who engage in mindfulness meditation will be able to help their clients understand the practice within a specific spiritual or religious context and relate their meditation experiences to the process of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Furthermore, they will be able to help their Christian clients understand their experience within the context of Christian spirituality.

Mindfulness Meditation and Empathy

Mindfulness meditation is a useful tool to help pastoral counsellors deepen their capacity for empathy. Even though the story lines or the content of thought will never be the same between any two people, the dynamics of the psyche are. Pastoral counsellors who engage in mindfulness meditation will likely confront in themselves many of the same dynamics they see in their clients. This is true regardless of the level of development attained by either client or counsellor. However, when a client with a very high level of development is in counselling with a pastoral counsellor with a relatively low one, there may be ranges of experiences of knowing in the client that are, as yet, foreign to the counsellor. In this situation, the client should be referred to another counsellor.

Usually, however, counsellor and client will both have attained a degree of stability on

the rational, or the centauric levels, as outlined in Wilber's model. Both will also likely have some developmental lines where they are partially stuck at lower levels. Most pastoral counsellors do not work with clients troubled by pathologies at either the lowest end of the scale, psychosis, or at the higher, the transpersonal pathologies.

Through the practice of mindfulness meditation, pastoral counsellors can continue their own personal journey and, at the same time, expand their capacity to empathize with their clients. The following case study illustrates how one counsellor found increased empathy with his client as the result of his meditation practice.

Sheila was a mother of three who was complaining of panic attacks brought on by difficulties she had with her husband. Two days before entering the pastoral counselling relationship, she had collapsed at home overwhelmed by anxiety and fear. Her partner was addicted to drugs and alcohol. She felt she could no longer tolerate his behavior, yet she could not bear the thought of ending the marriage. When she spoke of her fear, she said she was afraid of grieving, of feeling jealous, and of being alone for the rest of her life. As she spoke of the possibility of ending the relationship, her legs started to shake, she became quite pale, and her voice began to tremble. Sheila described herself as being paralyzed by her fear. She stated that during her anxiety attacks, it was as if her world closed in on her and she was unable to move.

Her counsellor, John, had never experienced a panic attack, but his meditation practice gave him some insight into her experience and helped him develop a degree of empathy with her. In his daily meditation practice he had often encountered his own fear. He had come to recognize that when he felt afraid, his awareness seemed to close in and that his

fear often acted as a cocoon shielding him from unwanted experiences. He knew what it was like to feel trapped, or stuck, and how hopeless that could feel.

In his meditation experience, he had also become familiar with how difficult it could be, at times, to find space around some thoughts, fantasies, or emotions. He had described it as being like catching hold of a dragon's tail and being unable to let go until the ride was over. In his experience, during those wild rides on the dragon's tail, he would often talk himself into reliving difficult experiences as a way of avoiding pain, or loss. Even though these experiences during meditation were momentary and did not reach the degree of intensity Sheila reported, they helped him to connect with her feelings of being surrounded by her fear, her sense of being stuck and unable to see a way out, and her desire to avoid pain. When he shared the image of catching hold of a dragon's tail, she said that fit with her experience.

His meditation experience also gave him some insight into how he might help Sheila work with her fear and sense of being overwhelmed. He perceived that she was growing more anxious as she talked about the possibility of ending her relationship. He took three approaches in helping her de-escalate her anxiety: (1) He tried to help her dis-identify from her fear, to look at it as an observer would and thereby create a degree of space. (2) He tried to help her connect with her bodily experience and trust her ability to find safety. (3) He tried to help her to recruit her thinking processes to analyze the situation and to reinforce her trust that her situation might be workable.

In the course of the session, he helped her to begin to dis-identify with her emotions by directing her attention to them and asking her to describe what she was feeling right at

that moment and where in her body she was feeling it. He then asked her when she first noticed how she was feeling. Each of these questions were aimed at helping her to shift to a stance of observer of her experience. Shifting to an observer position was difficult for her, at first, for she had already caught hold of the dragon's tail.

John also worked to help her recruit her rational resources to work with her situation, by asking her what she had tried to do in the past that helped her when she felt the same way. She reported she had tried many things, but that none had helped. When he asked if she would be willing to try something that might help, she agreed. He then invited her to place her hand on her abdomen and take a few deep breaths. In part, this was to distract her from her conviction that she couldn't stop her fear once it started, it also served the purpose of helping her reconnect with her breath and her body.

He then invited her to stand, take three more deep breaths, look around the room, and describe to him what she saw. He did this to help her get a sense of reality and of space. As she did this, some color began to return to her face. Her voice was still tight and soft. He asked her where in the room she would feel safest and when she indicated a corner, he invited her to go there, assuring her he would stay right where he was.

Once she was in the corner, he redirected her attention to speak a moment about her three children. As she talked she began to get more animated. When he noticed that her tone of voice had changed and her anxiety had abated to some degree, he asked her again what she was feeling right at that moment. When she said she was not as scared as she had been earlier, he shifted the focus to explore with her the process that had just occurred. They discussed the process of noticing what she was feeling as it was

beginning, turning her attention to her body and working to get grounded by using her breath, checking out the reality of her perception of danger and trusting her sense of where it was safe. They discussed how this time she was able to shift her focus from her fear for a few moments to talk about her children and how that gave her a sense of space with her fear. Although it would take more practice, in that one session she experienced being able to touch her fear and move away from it before going into a full blown anxiety attack. In that experience she gained a faint glimmer of hope that she might be able to learn to tolerate her emotions without being overwhelmed by them. In subsequent sessions they would build on that experience.

John's mindfulness meditation practice helped him understand something of the power and the pervasiveness of fear. It enabled him to meet Sheila where she was and to trust that there was a way to help her work with her fear. The techniques of returning attention to the breath and labeling emotions as thinking also provided him with first hand experience in reclaiming a sense of awareness and presence even after he had been taken for a ride by his emotions. John's meditation experiences helped him to be sensitive to the shifts in Sheila's level of anxiety as they worked together and helped him assess when to intervene and how. Finally, his meditation practice enabled him to be present with her without being personally overwhelmed by her fear, or by his own internal dynamics.

Mindfulness Meditation and Presence

Chapter 9 discussed many of the ways in which mindfulness meditation is able to encourage the development of increased awareness and thus to facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth. Perhaps the greatest benefit to be gained by a pastoral

counsellor who decides to engage in the practice of mindfulness meditation is that this practice has the potential to enhance the pastoral counsellor's *presence* during counselling sessions with clients. By presence, I mean that pastoral counsellors are able to bring more of themselves into the counselling session. Presence is understood as receptive, perceptive, active, and responsive awareness.

In the terminology of process philosophy, as mindfulness meditation enhances the dominant occasion of experience's ability to prehend data from the universe and hold those data in creative contrast, the dominant occasion of experience, the mind/self, is able to perceive and to be present to, and hence respond to, greater depth and range of experience. This presence transcends and yet includes reason, will, emotion, and sensation. Presence is arguably one of the greatest gifts a pastoral counsellor can bring to counselling.

Hellen Newland, a mindfulness meditation practitioner described her understanding of her ministry as a hospital chaplain, by speaking of her ministry of presence. She stated:

My understanding of my ministry is that I am available to whatever is happening for others, that I keep my time and my mind unfilled and uncluttered. (Meditation practice specifically applies here.) In this way, when I am conferring with the head of a department on a concern of the center and her father has died recently, I am open to having a conversation about the grieving process. I am there with her without having other things on my mind. When I am sitting with a dying patient, I can be truthful with them that they are dying. I can, as well, be truthful to the friends and family that come to visit.²

As an example of how mindfulness meditation assists one to develop *presence*, Hellen described her experience at the time of a young man's death. This was the first time she

²Hellen Newland, letter to author, 22 March 1998.

had been with someone when they died. She wrote:

I was sitting by the bed of a young man, a friend and member of the community I minister to, as his mother was blessing him with some scented holy water. At first I felt I could not possibly handle the power of the emotions that were arising in me, then I remembered [my practice]. At that moment I settled and was able to be present to his passing . . . I was not prepared for the power of death until the gift of peace. Up until then I was a watcher. After that I was a full participant, I was available to be lead by spirit. It felt like I was an integral part of the whole. There was not a me as opposed to another person or even the air around me. I was doing what was to be done and it flowed from everywhere not *my* mind, not *my* ideas. It felt in place and I was a part of it.³

Mindfulness meditation practice does not stop one from thinking, feeling, fantasizing, or engaging, in any of the varied activities of the mind. It does, however, help individuals recognize when they are not fully present and it gives them a mechanism for returning to awareness of the present. Returning to the present does not mean that thoughts, or emotions, stop. They still continue. One does not have to be so attached to them that they block one's awareness of and ability to respond to the richness of what is happening.

Presence is particularly helpful in cutting short the dynamics of countertransference. In Hellen's experience of being present at the time of the young man's death, for example, she felt at first that she could not handle the emotions that were arising in her. In her verbatim of that encounter she wrote "I feel as if my heart will break open and my head will explode. I think I need to go to the office and be held by Victoria, my supervisor."⁴ Her own father had died when she was a young girl. She had unresolved grief issues and her first desire was to find comfort for herself from a mother figure. Rather than being

³Ibid.

⁴Hellen Newland, verbatim, 10 Nov. 1997, sent to author 22 March 1998, emphasis in original.

overwhelmed by her feelings, she remembered her practice and was able to be present with the family through the time of death. Her mindfulness practice did not lead her to repress her feelings, but it did allow her to find space around them so that she could be present with the people and the situation that was happening in the room.

Mindfulness meditation helps us in our ability to exercise presence, by helping us grow in awareness of our own internal dynamics, differentiate from them, and transcend them, so that we can be present with our clients and open and responsive to our clients' experiences, dynamics, and processes. Though we may not engage in the practice of mindfulness meditation during counselling sessions, simply remembering our practice can serve as a mechanism to help us return to awareness and to presence.

Introducing Mindfulness Meditation to Pastoral Counselling Clients:

The Urge to be Entertained

Years ago I worked as part of the stage crew in a little theatre. At that time, I learned most people found it difficult to sit very long in silence. Our set changes were timed to the second, because audiences found even a minute to be an interminable length of time to sit in silence in the dark. As stage crew, our goal was the forty-five second change. Years later, when I was studying for the ordained ministry, our worship professor instructed us to limit our times of silent prayer to fifteen to thirty seconds. In each congregation that I have served, I have not needed to keep my eye on a stop watch, for inevitably shuffles and coughs begin around the fifteen to twenty second mark. Although my simple observations of the tolerance levels of theatre audiences, or church members, do not amount to a scientific study, I do believe they are an indication of how accustomed most North

Americans are to being entertained, and to how unaccustomed many people are to sitting with themselves as their only company.

A group I belong to recently discussed the prevalence of the media and the influence of television around the world. As anecdotal evidence of the need to be entertained, one person from Taiwan told the group her son had a television in every room in his house, and that she had often observed street people with their own small portable television sets. If such anecdotal evidence reflects a larger reality, then perhaps North Americans are not alone in their discomfort with silence and the company of their own minds.

I raise this issue as I begin to explore the introduction of mindfulness meditation to counselling clients, because although the instructions for this practice are quite simple, this practice goes against the drive to be entertained that exists in our society, and mindfulness meditation is not overtly entertaining. I would not go so far as to suggest that the drive for entertainment is universal. The point being made here is that the media and other forms of entertainment for the mind are so pervasive that many of our pastoral counselling clients may be quite uncomfortable with simply sitting for half an hour. The response of one woman attending a workshop on spirituality is a case in point. After the introduction of mindfulness meditation, she declared emphatically that she wouldn't be able to stand it, nor could she understand how anyone could sit in silence with only their own thoughts.

Individuals may recognize the agitation of their thoughts, and the fear it engenders may be too great for them to begin working directly with their mind. For such individuals, it may be more appropriate to suggest object-centred forms of meditation, like guided imagery, yoga, walking meditation, or spoken prayer. These practices provide more form

and structure than mindfulness meditation does. These practices give the mind something to focus on and a path to follow, be it a story line, a physical posture, a movement, or words. The presence of structure can help alleviate some of the free floating anxiety that may arise when individuals begin to intentionally work with awareness.

The desire for entertainment is also evidenced by the expectations some individuals bring to the practice. For example, Bill was a thirty-two year old pastoral counselling client who complained that he repeatedly encountered difficulties in his relationships with his supervisors at work. He was not happy about how he responded in those relationships, yet he felt powerless to respond differently. He had explored guided imagery through the use of relaxation tapes and his counsellor thought mindfulness meditation might be a useful adjunct to the their work. Bill expressed a willingness to try the practice, so the counsellor introduced Bill to mindfulness meditation during a session, then sent Bill home to practice during the week. When he returned, Bill spoke enthusiastically of the peace and comfort he felt as a result of meditating. As he described his experience, it became clear that he had spent his time on the cushion creating and following elaborate fantasies of how he could interact with his supervisors and come out on top. He stated that at first he had tried returning his attention to the out breath, but that nothing happened. When an imaginary encounter with a supervisor arose in his thoughts, he grabbed hold of it, and played it out in his mind.

In Bill's case, the pastoral counsellor congratulated Bill on his efforts at meditating. He underscored how the fantasies were excellent examples of thinking and encouraged Bill to apply the technique of labelling and returning attention to the out breath, during his next

meditation session. His counsellor also shared how being aware of having thoughts was an encouraging sign, for some people do not possess that awareness when they first start meditating. They spoke briefly of the difference between this meditation technique and guided imagery, then the counsellor encouraged Bill to stay with the technique, even when it seemed as though nothing was happening.

The Need for Encouragement

Clients often require a great deal of gentle encouragement when they first begin to meditate. For most people, mindfulness meditation will be a new skill, and it will draw upon aspects of their will and awareness they may not have consistently exercised before. It takes a degree of ego strength to bring oneself to meditate and it requires commitment to stay with the practice. It takes practice to grow to trust in oneself and in the benefits this practice has to offer. As with any new skill, it is far easier to learn through the reinforcement of doing things right, than it is to persist in efforts to learn when one is only told what to correct. Support and encouragement are essential, if clients are to develop gentleness with themselves.

In learning this new skill, some adults may experience performance anxiety created by the desire to *get it right*, and the fear that they might not be able to. Identifying parts of their practice that they are able to accomplish, and highlighting and expanding on those aspects, may help to lesson this anxiety and encourage clients to trust in their abilities. The desire to get it right can cause clients difficulty. This desire can lead clients to follow the technique so tightly that every thought, feeling, or sensation is immediately identified and labelled, and this can lead to clients experiencing very little space. It often results in

them falling asleep. Although uncomfortable, this situation is workable. Talking with clients about their practice may help them to recognize the tenacity of thoughts and their desire for success. If they can see this, they may be able to lighten up a bit, relax, and experience a little space during their practice.

Mindfulness meditation is an awareness practice that is rooted in the understanding that God is present and accessible to us in our experience. It relies upon, and aids in the development of a deep trust in God and in our own basic nature. Our experience of our minds may be pleasant or unpleasant, or anywhere in between, yet no matter what it is, it is workable. There is nothing inherently evil about our thoughts, emotions, or sensations. God knows them. We can know them. In knowing them we can grow in our love for ourselves and for God. So there is nothing in our experience that we have to resist during time spent meditating. This may be the greatest encouragement we can give to our clients.

This theology may be counter to personal beliefs held by our clients. For many, original sin and the judgement of God overshadows God's grace and loving presence. It may be important, therefore, to explore the images and understandings of God held by clients. If we trust in the inherent goodness of God and trust in God's presence in and through creation, we have a genuine basis for our gentle encouragement and support of our clients. God is truly at work in our clients' lives and in our clients' beings.

Why Choose the Tool of Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a spiritual discipline that works directly with the human experience of awareness and in doing so, it employs a minimum of jargon. The working material is the individual's own mind and experience. Its usefulness in working with

emotions, sensations, scripts, habitual patterns, existential angst, and awareness in general were discussed in detail in Chapter 9. Although mindfulness meditation is not able to change the order or sequence of development on any of the various developmental lines, I have argued that it is able to help speed up the process of development and aid people in healing and growth.

Mindfulness meditation is a spiritual discipline that relies on, and encourages, trust in the goodness and present love of God. For clients whose spiritual lives and practices have been hampered by punitive images of God, and by theologies that display a basic distrust of the human spirit, this practice may be a viable means for them to re-commit themselves to their spiritual growth and, in so doing, aid their ability to know and love God, their neighbours, and themselves. For all of these reason, I contend that mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for the practice of pastoral counselling.

How to Introduce and Use the Practice in Pastoral Counselling

When a pastoral counsellor has decided this meditation practice may be useful to a client, decisions need to be made on how to introduce the practice. First, one must decide whether to introduce this practice oneself, or refer the client to a meditation instructor. If the pastoral counsellor does not have experience with the practice, even though the instructions on the technique are simple, the client should be referred to a meditation instructor. A pastoral counsellor who has some meditation experience, and who has access to an instructor for support, may choose to be the one to introduce the practice.

The first time the practice is introduced, it is best to do so in the midst of a counselling session. That way, the client's first experience will be in a safe, bounded container. This

also provides the counsellor with an opportunity to witness the client's posture and any difficulties they may experience in simply sitting. In introducing the practice, it is helpful if the pastoral counsellor talks the client through the points on posture, while assuming the meditation posture themselves. In that way, the client has a physical model as a reference. Once the posture is introduced and assumed, the counsellor can introduce the technique of labelling thoughts, sensations, emotions, as thinking, then going out with the breath. The counsellor may suggest examples of phenomena that may arise to which the label thinking would be applied.

The counsellor's presence and practice with the client during the first effort will give the client encouragement to see the first effort through. For the first time sitting, allow ten minutes to practice. Ten minutes is long enough to provide an opportunity for the client to settle, and perhaps experience boredom or drowsiness. The presence of the counsellor will help encourage the client to stay with the practice. Ten minutes is short enough, however, to also allow for time to debrief. Introducing the practice during a session gives the counsellor and client an opportunity to discuss the client's experience and any initial difficulties the client may have had. Introducing the practice in this way increases the possibility for clients to have a positive first experience.

The meditation instructors relied on in this work recommend sitting twenty minutes on a daily basis. For many clients, particularly when they are new to the practice, twenty minutes a day may be too difficult. Daily meditation practice involves a lifestyle change. It may be better to start slow and reinforce success, than to begin with high expectations and meet with failure.

In my counselling practice, I have found that most people can manage five-ten minute sessions three times a week during their first month of sitting. With some clients, we have spent the first five minutes of a session sitting, before we begin to talk. This seems to help them get there and get grounded. Other clients prefer to sit before arriving, and use the entire session for speaking about their issues.

After clients have gained initial stability and familiarity with the posture and technique, suggest they create a time to meditate every day, even if only for a few minutes. When a daily pattern is established, the time can be lengthened. Five minutes is a very short time and really only allows the person to find their seat and begin to settle their mind. In a twenty minute session, the mind has a chance to settle and one's experience of the practice will change. If there is a local sitting meditation group, it might offer the support of other people. Meditating in a group provides individuals with encouragement to stay with their practice. The presence of other people also tends to encourage a different constellation of thoughts and emotions than those experienced when sitting alone. For example, group practice may encourage heightened thoughts about one's relationship with others and, thereby, facilitate a faster recognition of developmental stuck places than would occur in solitary practice.

Although meditators are not encouraged to pursue lines of thought, or analytical enquiry into their experience during their formal meditation practice, it can be useful for clients to explore their meditation experiences with their pastoral counsellor. Clients can be encouraged to make note of things that arose for them during their meditation and bring those experiences into counselling sessions. Discussing the client's experience of

meditation will also encourage them to develop a sense of curiosity about their experience on and off the cushion.

Cautionary Notes: Possible Difficulties in Using Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation will have only limited usefulness for some clients, and there are some clients for whom this practice would be counter-productive. For example, this practice is not appropriate for persons suffering from psychoses, and it may not be appropriate for those with narcissistic or borderline personality disorders. Such individuals have not yet attained a strong enough sense of self to allow them to differentiate from their experience. This practice may not only be of limited help for them, it may cause greater difficulties including the triggering psychotic episodes, or severe regressive episodes.

Although mindfulness meditation may be useful to individuals with anxiety disorders, caution and care need to be taken when introducing them to this practice. These individuals have difficulty experiencing and containing their emotions. Their anxiety may escalate during practice, because of the relative lack of structure involved in this discipline. Although mindfulness meditation may be helpful to such individuals in the long run, if it is introduced to them, it should be introduced gradually. With these clients, the pastoral counsellor may periodically opt to include the practice within the counselling session. The structure of the sessions may provide sufficient containment for them to engage in the practice and increase their confidence in their ability to tolerate their emotions.

Pastoral counsellors also need to be aware that, because this practice tends dissolve repressive mechanisms, clients may experience episodes of temporary regression. These

regressive episodes may be experienced as troubling, and our clients may require extra support and encouragement. Because of this, mindfulness meditation is not the best practice to introduce during brief therapy, or crisis counselling. Mindfulness meditation is better suited for long term, growth oriented work. In a long-term therapeutic relationship, the pastoral counsellor has a larger base for understanding the client's patterns and shifts in mood and behaviour and, thereby, is in a better position to provide a degree of stability and reassurance, when temporary regressive episodes occur.

As with any technique, the counsellor needs to trust the client's sense of timing as exhibited through their words, behaviour, and emotional responses. Resistance may be a healthy sign that it is time to slow down. It may also indicate that the approach is not appropriate for that client at that time. If the pastoral counsellor believes that God is present in and through the client, willing and luring the client to actualize healing and growth, the counsellor can trust that the client will evidence through their responses, the best approach and timing for their process of growth. The challenge is for the counsellor to be aware of what is happening with the client and, in turn, to help the client grow in their ability to be aware of and trust in their own processes. Whatever occurs provides the possibility for learning and can become the raw material for future healing and growth.

Guidelines for Assessment

However useful mindfulness meditation may be in facilitating healing and growth, it is still only one of many possible approaches pastoral counsellors may use in their practice. In addition to the cautionary notes offered above, I offer here some preliminary guidelines for consideration when assessing when different therapeutic interventions may be more

appropriate than mindfulness meditation.

Wilber proposes meditation loosens the embedded-unconscious and “as the embedded-unconscious begins to loosen, the self’s hold on *all* of the various developmental lines begins to loosen; *all of the developmental lines are put into play*. . . . Temporary regression in any of the lines is quite possible at any point.”⁵ For this reason, pastoral counsellors need to exercise caution in using mindfulness meditation with clients who exhibit poor impulse control. Over time, mindfulness meditation can help individuals contain their emotions and it can help free them from acting on impulsive urges. This, however, takes time. Given the possibility of regression, moreover, it is possible that some individuals may have increased difficulty controlling impulsive activity. Earlier, I suggested mindfulness meditation may assist a man in attaining freedom from impulsively acting on his anger. In situations where individuals are habitually driven by their impulses to abuse themselves or others, a pastoral counsellor’s primary obligation is to prevent further abuse. Before introducing a practice that may lead to regression, pastoral counsellors need to be assured that their clients have established other methods of coping with abusive impulses. Mindfulness meditation is not a crisis intervention strategy.

Again, because temporary regression is likely, it is not appropriate to introduce mindfulness meditation as coping strategy in situations such as acute grief or trauma. After the acute phase has passed, however, mindfulness meditation may assist individuals with their continued healing and growth.

⁵Ken Wilber, The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997), 248-49, emphasis in original.

Finally, in using mindfulness meditation with individuals recovering from trauma, because meditation lifts repressive barriers, clients may recall and relive abusive experiences. Pastoral counsellors need to be aware of this possibility and be vigilant for indications of regressive or self-destructive behaviour.

Summary

Having shown in previous chapters the value of mindfulness meditation, this chapter discussed how mindfulness meditation may be implemented in pastoral counselling practice. I began by suggesting that if pastoral counsellors decide to use mindfulness meditation in their practice with clients, it is important for them to have at least some first hand experience. I also argued the importance of having the support of an experienced meditation instructor when using mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling. Using case material, I illustrated how mindfulness meditation may positively contribute to the development of empathy and presence in the counsellor.

Issues relating to the introduction of mindfulness meditation to pastoral counselling clients were discussed and suggestions offered to assist pastoral counsellors in introducing this practice to their clients. Finally, I explored some situations in which the use of mindfulness meditation may be counter-productive to the aims of pastoral counselling. I indicated some guidelines that pastoral counsellors may use in assessing the appropriateness of selecting this tool for use in their practice.

CHAPTER 11

Conclusions and Questions for Further Study

Counseling for growth is direct service of God. The counsellor is observing God's working in the counselee, helping to remove some of the barriers to that working, and encouraging the tentative steps toward openness to life, and therefore to God, that have brought the counselee to seek help from a fellow human being.¹

I have argued that mindfulness meditation is a useful tool for pastoral counsellors in their efforts to support the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of their clients. People seek the services of pastoral counsellors for help with difficulties they are experiencing in their lives. They enter pastoral counselling relationships hoping that they may experience healing and growth. A fundamental aspect of the pastoral counsellor's identity is the ability to conceptualize, comprehend, and work with spirituality and the interrelatedness of spirit and psyche. Pastoral counsellors can draw upon techniques and tools from both psychotherapy and religion in their work with clients. Using insights from process theology, transpersonal psychology, and the teachers of mindfulness meditation, I have presented a theoretical basis for understanding how mindfulness meditation is able to assist psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

The form of meditation examined in this dissertation is *shamatha vipashyana*. The teachers of this practice describe it as being an awareness meditation practice and they credit it with being able to help facilitate the emergence of various qualities. Those qualities, moreover, are ones that pastoral counsellors may view as being indicative of psychological and spiritual healing and growth. The major work of this dissertation has

¹John B. Cobb, Jr., Theology and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 53.

consisted of developing a theoretical framework that is able to explain how mindfulness meditation is able to bring about these effects and, thereby, provide support for my thesis.

In arguing for the adoption of an evolutionary view of the nature of reality, I relied on process thought to support my contention that change is not only possible, it is an inherent aspect of the nature of reality. Creation is composed of occasions of experience and these occasions are not static entities that endure through time, they are processes.

God is intimately present throughout creation and wills the realization of increased intensity of feeling. Intensity of feeling results from the attainment of increased complexity. In providing an initial aim for each emerging occasion, God acts persuasively, luring each occasion to actualize increased intensity, depth, value, beauty, creativity, and love. Although God has a will for the universe, and for each entity, God is not the sole determinate of the universe. Each entity possesses a degree of freedom for self-determination. Each also possesses the ability to influence subsequent occasions.

In this view, human beings are understood as existing within the extensive continuum of creation and, therefore, share all that is implied by being part of an evolutionary reality. As with all other entities, change is not only possible for human beings, it is an inherent aspect of their existence. Human existence is partly self-determined and partly determined by others. Furthermore, human beings have an intimate relationship with God and possess some capacity to know and respond creatively to God's will.

I have argued that in each moment, human beings possess a dominant occasion of experience and that the dominant occasion is what allows human beings to enjoy a unity of experience. The dominant occasion of experience in a human being is what we normally

refer to as the self, the spirit, or the mind. It is the centre of experience.

Each occasion of experience in the human being possesses a degree of freedom. This freedom is two-fold: (1) the freedom of self-determination in response to the variety of influences informing its creation; and (2) the freedom to determine how it will seek to influence future occasions of experience. Although God is present in the formation of each occasion, willing each to actualize the best of possibilities, each occasion has a degree of freedom and, therefore, may choose to actualize less than the best. Individual sin and systemic evil arise as a result of creation's freedom. Both personal sin and systemic evil play a role in the development of pathology, defined as the stuck places in the evolution of consciousness.

The human mind is self-creative. It receives information from all of the occasions of experience that form the human body and the larger environment. Human beings have evolved over time and the evolution of human consciousness has allowed human beings to actualize increasing levels of depth of experience. Each evolutionary development, in fact, is attained through a process of moving through a stage of identification with an existing level or state of being, to disidentifying with that state, to reintegrating that state on a new and higher level. These three stages of identification, disidentification, and reintegration are involved in all processes of evolution of consciousness.

Relying on the work of Wilber, I have suggested that there are several different developmental lines within the human psyche. These developmental lines include, but are not limited to: rationality and cognition, emotions, morality, and will. I likened these developmental lines to ladders, and the various developmental levels were likened to the

rungs on each ladder. In this model, the self/mind/spirit/dominant occasion of experience, is understood to be the climber of the various ladders. Because the various developmental lines are inter-related, the self may be able to climb to a higher level on some ladders, while remaining at a relatively low level on others. The predominant level attained across all ladders determines the developmental level of the self. The aim of human growth and development is for progress on all of the developmental lines, so that the self may grow in its ability to transcend and include greater depth within itself and, thereby, actualize greater intensity, complexity, and value in the world.

This model for growth and development may be considered a “stage theory,” because it insists that there are identifiable stages of development that emerge in an identifiable sequence, if they emerge at all. This model also holds that the stages and order of their emergence are universal. Unlike many stage theories, however, this model recognizes the interrelatedness of biology, society, culture, and consciousness. It acknowledges that different cultures will value and encourage different expressions of consciousness. It also acknowledges that development rarely, if ever, progresses in a directly linear path. These are some of the ways this model attempts to address concerns raised by the critics of traditional stages theories.

This model suggests that in the evolution of consciousness, the self may become wholly or partially stuck on particular rungs of the various developmental lines. Even though the self may be able to continue to grow on other lines, and though it may be able to partially proceed a little further on the *stuck lines*, the overall growth of the self will be impeded by each of the stuck points. From the perspective of transpersonal psychology, for the self

to proceed beyond a particular developmental threshold, it may need to return to the stuck points and re-identify with those places, in order to differentiate, and reintegrate on a new and higher level.

Spiritual growth was defined as the self-transcending-self. Each time the self negotiates one of the developmental thresholds, it can be said to have transcended itself and, thereby, attained a degree of spiritual growth. The majority of pastoral counselling clients will be working with healing and growth centred in one or more of the mid-range levels of consciousness described by Wilber. As with all other levels of consciousness, each of these levels has its own particular worldview, and its own particular potential for pathology. Mindfulness meditation is able to help facilitate psychological and spiritual healing and growth at each level of conscious development, by enhancing an individual's capacity for awareness and, thereby, assist the individual in the processes of differentiation and reintegration.

I have argued that for clients who have attained sufficient differentiation of their physical and emotional selves and from their physical and emotional environment (for example, individuals who do not suffer from psychoses), mindfulness meditation has the potential to facilitate in healing and growth through the each of the developmental levels described by Wilber. Increased awareness, attained through the practice of mindfulness meditation, aids in the quest for psychological and spiritual healing and growth, by enhancing the individual's ability to perceive and respond creatively to the possibilities present in each moment. It does this by aiding individuals in the process of differentiating from their sense perceptions, their emotional experiences, and their rational experiences,

so that the individuals may then transcend each of these, and reintegrate them on a new and higher level of consciousness.

In particular, I have argued that the intensity, breadth, and complexity of conscious experience is heightened proportionately by the amount and quality of data that is allowed to enter and inform our experience. By increasing awareness, mindfulness meditation is able to lessen the effects of repression and enhance the range of experiences individuals can contain, be informed by, and respond to. Mindfulness meditation helps to lessen the effects of repression on each of the developmental lines, and at each of the developmental levels, and thereby, is able to enhance psychological and spiritual healing and growth.

It is my contention that mindfulness meditation is able to help lift repression by transmutation active in sense perception and encourage enhanced synchronization of body and mind and, thereby, reverse the potentially pathological tendency toward repression of body and sensation. It is also my contention that mindfulness meditation is able to help dissolve the mechanisms active in the repression of emotion. In so doing, greater amounts of psychic energy become available to the self, and the self attains greater ability to freely respond to its emotions, its environment, and to God. Furthermore, I have argued that mindfulness meditation is able to enhance awareness of roles and scripts, and thereby, aid in the process of differentiating and transcending attributed roles and scripts. Again, in the process of differentiation and transcendence, the self grows in its ability to hold in its experience greater richness and depth, and in its ability to freely and creatively respond in each moment to its experience.

Finally, I have argued that mindfulness meditation is able to enhance the development

of will. As spiritual growth has been defined as the ability of self to transcend self, the development of will is essential to the development of the self's capability to transcend itself. The process of dissolving repression of the body, emotions, and roles and scripts, aids in the self's ability to transcend itself and move to increasingly higher levels of being.

Inasmuch as awareness is central to our ability to know and respond creatively to God, ourselves, and our world, mindfulness meditation is a valuable tool for pastoral counsellors in our work to enhance the psychological and spiritual healing and growth of our clients. It is a spiritual discipline that is able to enhance human beings' ability to work directly with themselves and with their experience. "Meditation practice isn't about trying to throw ourselves away and becoming something better. It's about befriending who we are already. The ground of the practice is you or me or whoever we are right now, just as we are."² Mindfulness meditation is a practice that enhances human beings' ability to tolerate the potential richness and depth of human experience and, to grow in their ability to freely choose how to be in the world. It is a simple practice that is potentially capable of supporting tremendous healing and growth, both for the pastoral counsellor and for the client.

This dissertation has relied on theoretical grounding from process theology and from transpersonal psychology and has been supported by anecdotal evidence derived from personal experience and from clinical case study. In developing this theoretical framework for the use of mindfulness meditation in the practice of pastoral counselling, I have

²Pema Chödrön, The Wisdom of No Escape: and The Path of Loving-Kindness (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1991), 4.

suggested several ways in which mindfulness meditation may be introduced to pastoral counselling practice. It has been beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, to present a complete *how to* manual on the use of mindfulness meditation in pastoral counselling. Development of detailed instructions and support for the use of this meditation practice in counselling has been left for future work.

Although several suggestions were made about how pastoral counsellors may work with material raised through the practice of mindfulness meditation, there are numerous dissertations yet to be written on mindfulness meditation and pastoral counselling focussed on the lifting of repression, working with neuroses, or with script pathology. Similarly, this dissertation has limited itself to the use of mindfulness meditation for psychological and spiritual healing and growth on the magic, mythic and rational levels of existence, with only fleeting mention made of the upper levels of existence. Although few individuals will enter pastoral counselling to work on growth beyond the centauric level, there is an entire area of research to be done on the use of mindfulness meditation for growth at the upper levels. This research includes addressing the question of the nature of those upper levels of consciousness and of their respective pathologies.

Another area that was raised but not explored is the relationship between meditation practice and social justice and systemic evil. It is my contention that individual healing and growth are essential to countering the suffering in our world created by systemic evil and social injustice. It is my contention, furthermore, that contemplative practice leads to compassionate action. There is a whole field open for research exploring this claim. What measurable correlation is there between contemplative practice and social action? What

percentage of the people who engage in social activism practice meditation? Conversely, what percentage of meditators are involved in working for social causes? Are there measurable differences between types of contemplative practices and involvement in social action? Exploration of these questions will be useful to the ongoing discussions in pastoral counselling and pastoral theology over whether individual practices perpetuate or counteract the systemic evil in our world.

This dissertation has focussed on mindfulness meditation with only passing mention of the use of other spiritual disciplines. Yet to be explored are questions of how this practice may be used in complement with other forms of spiritual practice to enhance psychological and spiritual healing and growth. How might one, for example, combine mindfulness meditation with formal prayers of thanksgiving, petition, or confession? Or, how might one use mindfulness meditation in conjunction with object centred meditation practices?

The view of this dissertation includes the conviction that human beings are capable of psychological and spiritual healing and growth and that God is our ally in these processes. The evolution of consciousness in human beings over the past millennium has shown the potential richness available to human experience. Is the ultimate aim of this evolutionary journey Deity Mysticism in which human beings delight in intimate knowledge of God? Or, does it move to a place in which human beings so intimately know God that they also intimately know all other entities in existence and time and space collapses and there is only *this*? Either way, I believe the aim of the evolution of consciousness is towards increasing breadth and depth of experience, and that the practice of mindfulness meditation is one tool that may help us to grow, and enable us to discover and explore the

upper reaches of human consciousness, and find answers to the question of ultimate reality for ourselves.

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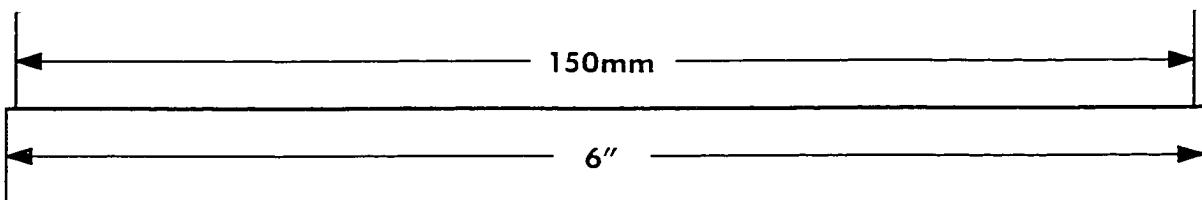
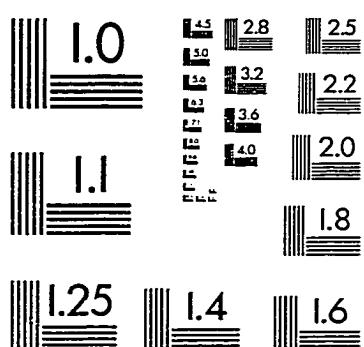
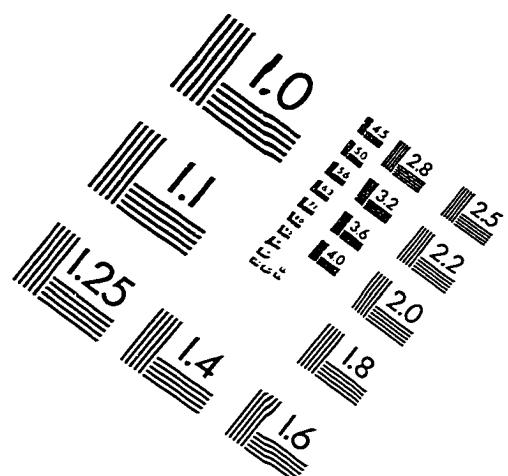
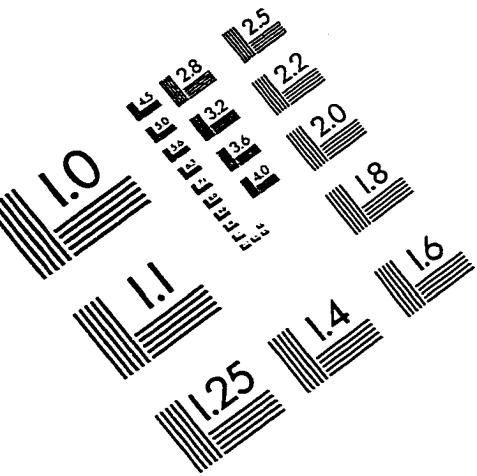
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IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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